The Rhetoric Surrounding Wolves in Five North American Comics

by

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Dedication

For wolves everywhere, past, present, and future.

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Thesis Abstract—Idaho State University (2023)

Wolves in North America are controversial with a complicated history. This work specifically focuses on the portrayal of wolves in five comics, three are Indigenous and two are Euro-American. Evaluative coding is used to assess scientific accuracy, the type of representation of wolves, and Euro-American bias. Rhetorical situations and multimodal rhetoric are analyzed. All comics represented wolves neutrally. Euro-American-biased comics tended to be more scientifically accurate. The Indigenous comics were less scientifically accurate. Overall, there are some trends with these three factors and comics provide a unique opportunity for more complexity about wolves to be represented. Chapter one, "Comics as a Medium," describes the elements of comics analyzed and merits of the medium. Chapter two, "A Brief Science and History of Gray Wolves in North America," describes the biology, political history, and past rhetoric of wolves. Chapter three, "Wolves in Selected Comics," explains methodology and results.

Introduction

In 2012, on a cold April day in Yellowstone National Park, I encountered my first real wolf (see Figure 1). It was simply walking along the road, avoiding making eye contact with my family and me, who were outright gawking at the animal as we drove by. I was shocked by this interaction as it had gone against everything I thought I knew about wolves. This wolf did not attack us, it did not even bother to snarl or growl at us. This wolf was not foaming at the mouth nor had a mangy coat, like how I had expected based on the stories I encountered as a child. That moment sparked my interest in wolves, and I set out on a mission to learn more about the species. While completing my undergraduate degree in biology, I realized that the scientific understanding of wolves was quite extensive. So, I turned my attention to the history, politics, and stories of wolves, which was more contentious. This thesis will examine some specific elements of those topics.

Figure 1. Photo of the first real-life wolf I saw in person. Taken in Yellowstone National Park in April 2012 by Anna Viktoria Lords.

Before diving into my research, it is necessary to establish some groundwork. The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) is an animal surrounded by controversy in North America[1]. Wolves are predators that have been known to kill livestock. However, there are non-lethal ways to deal with this problem, which is important as wolves are keystone species and vital to the health of North American ecosystems. There have been times when the wolf has been viewed as a villain and pest to the degree that warrants eradication or as an ecological hero that deserves full protection. There have even been times when both have been the case simultaneously. Why are there two drastically conflicting ideas about wolves? Some imagine the big bad wolf preying on Little Red Riding Hood, while others picture a graceful and elegant animal allowed to be wild, and there are many images between these two extremes. We can track these differences temporally and spatially as younger generations have been more accepting of wolves as have those that live in urban and suburban places. People's opinions have also been shaped by the stories that are told about wolves, as "The depiction of faunal characters in popular literature also tells us a great deal about environmental attitudes. The roles apportioned to animals – their character, motivations, and qualities – reflect societal views of the natural world, suggesting how humans perceive nature and alluding to our relationships with other species" (Jones, "*Never Cry Wolf*," 65). Stories about wolves, which are not always accurate, can contribute to opinions about wolves. With people still divided on wolves and their position in North American ecosystems precarious, it can be helpful to understand the basis for people's bias for or against wolves. Overall, the

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[1] There are many other cultures around the world that have eradicated wolves and have negative portrayals of wolves in their stories, just as there are many cultures that have positive portrayals of wolves and were able to coexist with them. However, for this thesis, I will be focusing on the history of wolves in North America for the sake of brevity.

opinion on wolves continues to shift and be complex and this can be traced through the rhetoric[2] surrounding wolves.

The shift in opinion about wolves may have gone too far since now wolves are put into the box of being ecological heroes when they need to be viewed as biological animals. Demonizing and deifying any animal can have severe consequences regarding management and conservation, so it is crucial to acknowledge how stories can affect people's opinions which can ultimately affect policy. While wolves being heroes may seem like the best way to save them, this can actually be harmful, and "Despite their attempts to challenge the way readers think about wolves, wolf studies have preserved the rigid dichotomy of good and evil that always characterized people's opinions of animals. They simply flip-flop the villains and the victims" (Coleman 3-4). Deifying can be as harmful as demonizing as it leads to poor management of populations. The goal of reintroduction is to get wolf populations back up to a healthy number where they can help control prey populations and eventually be hunted themselves. By painting wolves as heroes, however, people become resistant to the idea of managing their population. It is also not helpful to put humans in the role of villains as that might make people resistant to wolves in general. Despite the shifting narrative about wolves doing a lot of good to protect and reintroduce them, it is important to not take it too far. This is why I differentiate between positive and neutral portrayals of wolves in my analysis of the following comics.

The main question addressed in this thesis is "How are wolves portrayed in the selected comics?" Comics provide unique opportunities for both words about and images of wolves to be shared with the audience. In general, this combination of modalities leads to some interesting

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[2] Important to note that this thesis will not be covering animal rhetoric, which focuses on how non-human animals can use rhetoric in different ways, but instead will be focusing on how humans use rhetoric to talk and tell stories about wolves.

effects, so how might the interaction between them change the overall portrayal of wolves? Another benefit of comics is that they can lead to increased comprehension and be more persuasive as readers do not expect to encounter contentious material in a comic. The research here examines the rhetorical situation and multimodal rhetorical principles in the comics to analyze how images interact with the text to provide a more complex portrayal of wolves. I also use evaluative coding for scientific accuracy, the type of representation of wolves, and Euro-American bias. In my work, I have found that the selected comics allow for a more complex understanding of wolves beyond the binary of big bad wolf and ecological hero. This complexity is important as canonizing or deifying a biological animal can be harmful in the conservation and control of said animal and wolves are no exception. Comics could be a useful tool for sharing knowledge about wolves and potentially even changing people's opinions about them.

Understanding how wolves are portrayed in media is crucial as their position is precarious in the United States. Historically, the US has been an excellent experiment for the eradication and reintroduction of wolves. Recently, there has been a push to increase population control on wolves in several states. There are concerns that this legislation for population control will result in a second eradication of wolves and drastically change ecosystems. How people feel towards wolves can have a large impact on their protection, "We know from history that cultural beliefs and views about wolves shift over time, changing human behavior, and therefore wolf survival" ("Wolves of the World"). Hence why this work is important as media can influence opinions which influence policy.

This thesis is comprised of three chapters. In chapter one, "Comics as a Medium," I explore the different elements of comics as well as the benefits and drawbacks of using the medium for the topic of wolves. In chapter two, "A Brief Science and History of Gray Wolves in

North America," I describe important details that are important to understand to avoid defaulting to a strict binary and establish how wolves have been portrayed in the past in various pieces of rhetoric. In chapter three, "Wolves in Selected Comics," I analyze the five selected comics for the elements discussed in chapter one and use chapter two to determine the rhetorical situation of the comics. Finally, in my conclusion, I address the limitations of this work and where future work could potentially go. First, it is important to establish what constitutes a comic, and in the next section the elements of comics that will be analyzed in this thesis for the selected comics, and the merits of using comics for such a topic as wolves.

Comics as a Medium

Wolves are prevalent in many stories in all sorts of genres, so why focus on comics? The reason for this choice is the classic saying "A picture is worth a thousand words." Instead of a communicator having to take an exuberant amount of time and space to describe a scene, it can quickly and efficiently be shown to the reader through images. Comics also allow storytellers to follow the "show, don't tell" rule more easily. In an age where everything is fast-paced and attention spans are short, it is more important than ever to keep an audience engaged and get the message across quickly. Comics provide an interesting way to accomplish these goals.

At this point, it is important to define what a comic is. Scott McCloud defines comics as "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (9). This is the definition I will be starting from; however, it has a significant flaw as it excludes single-panel comics. Therefore, my definition of comics aligns more with Han Yu's, which includes cartoons, comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels (Chapter 1). I could also use Neil Cohn's definition, which is "a 'comic' can use any combination of writing and images: single images, sequential images, some writing, no writing, dominated by writing, etc." (2). I will not be any more specific in my definition of comics because as Douglas Wolk says "If you try to draw a boundary that includes everything that counts as comics and excludes everything that doesn't, two things happen: first, the medium always wriggles across that boundary, and second, whatever politics are implicit in the definition always boomerang on the definer" (17). Therefore, I humbly abstain from the debate on the definition of comics. Cohn's definition best matches the pieces I analyze in this thesis; however, other definitions could apply as well.

In this chapter, I will first describe the crucial elements of comics to facilitate my discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of using comics for educational and persuasive purposes. Elements of comics include multimodality, written language, and visual language. These characteristics result in audiences interacting with comics differently than they do with just written language. Comics can lead to better understanding and allow the audience to make their own connections. Readers also appear to be more open to new ideas that are presented in comics, which can allow for more effective persuasion. This is important to understand for my analysis of the selected comics in chapter three.

Elements of Comics

The most notable characteristic of comics is their multimodality. In general, "multimodal composition can be defined as communication using multiple modes that work purposely to create meaning" (Lutekewitte 2). Modes are the various tools of communication, such as visual, verbal, auditory, haptic, and more ways of communication. Comics use several communication modes,

> These modes include the linguistic mode, which is expressed through words; the audio mode, which is expressed through different lettering and balloon styles that suggest voice and volume; the visual mode, which is expressed through lines, white space, shading, and perspectives; the gestural mode, which is expressed through facial expressions and body postures; and the spatial mode, which is expressed through the portrayal of the environment (Jacobs, 2008). (Yu 185-6)

Combining these modalities can strengthen the understanding of the audience and can even create unique connections. Humans use these modes to communicate with each other, and

"Humans use only three modalities to express concepts: creating sounds, moving bodies, and creating graphic representations" (Cohn 3). Comics blur the lines of these modalities all the time and engage multiple facets of the reader's mind. For example, as comics use graphic representations (i.e., drawings and words) there is also silent sound and static motion. These appear counterintuitive because how can written words have sound or how can still pictures convey motion? However, comics manage to do this via visual iconography and closure.

Visual iconography, the vocabulary of comics according to McCloud, relies on visual rhetoric and visual language. Visual rhetoric is a common element that can be analyzed in various mediums, and a "broad definition of visual rhetoric name those symbolic actions enacted primarily through visual means, made meaningful through culturally derived ways of looking and seeing and endeavoring to influence diverse publics" (Olson et al. 2). This can be obvious in some comics and can help convey meaning to readers very quickly. The cultural element of visual rhetoric explains why different cultures approach comics differently, but they all use visuals to convey meaning, "Cartoons are similar to written language because both are abstract pictorial symbolic representations of concepts" (Duffy 4). In fact, the use of visuals in comics can be so much like written language that Neil Cohn argues that comics use visual language, which works like other languages, as "structured sequential images literally become visual languages" (3). This use of visual language with written language creates a unique medium that can have some interesting effects on its audience.

The combining of static images on a page to represent a cohesive story requires some crucial elements for the reader to understand. In general, this is accomplished by using culturally significant images and panels to denote meaning. The reader must make sense of the images and make connections between the panels to understand the comic, "If visual iconography is the

vocabulary of comics, closure is its grammar" (McCloud 67). The interplay of text and visuals requires the audience to look at the whole piece to really understand it. By combining their understanding of the words and pictures in the comic, the reader can comprehend the larger meaning behind the comic (Duncan et al. 140). What is phenomenal is that readers can put the story together despite the seeming disconnected medium thanks to visual iconography and closure. The connecting of panels via closure is important not only between individual panels but also for whole pages and whole comics, "Perhaps when we are reading a comic we are not merely connecting one panel to another, but adding each panel to continually evolving cognitive constructs of scenes, sequences, and ultimately, a narrative" (Duncan et al. 154-5). This format might increase engagement from readers since they must pay more attention to the story to understand it, however, I will discuss this more in the next section.

Images in comics often build the world of the comic for the reader to better understand the setting in which the story takes place. The "once upon a time" opener can be conveyed with words and images which can immerse the reader into the world effectively. As described by Duncan et al., these images that convey the setting are called diegesis and there are three main categories of such images. First, there are sensory diegetic images that invoke the real or imagined use of the reader's five senses. Then, there are non-sensory diegetic images that deal with non-tangible things like thoughts and emotions. Finally, there are "hermeneutic images, which are not part of the world of the story, but instead, comment on the story and influence how readers interpret it" (Duncan et al. 141). Hermeneutic images could resemble a fourth wall break where the creator of the comic is directly addressing the reader to point something out. All three forms of diegesis help create the world of the comic and allow the reader to imagine it clearly and more efficiently.

Other classes of images can be found in comics, such as psychological images, visual metaphors, and intertextual images. These can influence how readers interact with and interpret the comic and its meaning. An image can unveil some hidden characteristics, like how "A psychological image represents some aspect of a character's personality or state of mind" (Duncan et al. 146). This can allow for more efficient storytelling and the reader can potentially imagine what the character is feeling based on these images. Also, they may connect with the story more because of such images. An image can also be a reference to another thing, as "Visual metaphors use a picture of one thing to evoke the idea of something else" (Duncan et al. 146). Metaphors can prompt readers to make their own connections, which, in turn, can reinforce learning and critical thinking. Related to visual metaphors are intertextual images, which "remind the reader of something he or she has encountered in other media (movies, books, painting, TV shows, etc.)" (Duncan et al. 148). This familiarity can make readers feel more comfortable with the material and open to new ideas that are present in the comic. Overall, the type of images can influence how readers interact with the comic and cause relationships to form in their minds.

Finally, comics are a very additive medium, as each element builds off the previous to change the experience of the reader. Images build off each other and their meaning gets enriched in context, "The meaning of each image is affected by its relationship with other images, whether those in the same panel, in other panels, or in other texts" (Duncan et al. 151). This can be the case for images within the same panel and in different panels. The readers connect the images and panels to understand the story being told. Not only are panels connected by the audience, but the entire comic is connected, "Each page is experienced as both linear (a sequence of events encapsulated in panels) and holistic (a design object)" (Duncan et al. 155). This requires the

reader to be more active in making connections and interpreting the comic by using their understanding of visual and written language to have closure. As comic readers occupy an active role in the narrative, "The interpretation of an image is also likely to be affected by the reality, the individual experience, of each reader" (Duncan et al. 151). This can result in varying interpretations of a comic, making the genre ripe for rhetorical analysis. The interpretation of a comic is also likely to be affected by the style of the comic. There are trends in how different comics tell their stories, and "Readers can develop expectations about story content and tone from the style of art before they even read the first panel" (Duncan et al. 149). For example, a reader would expect a comic drawn like a Sunday Funny to be humorous while the same reader would expect a comic with a manga style to have a more complicated story. How images are used and the style of images will be explored in the comics I have selected in chapter three. In the next section, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of comics, which rely heavily on the elements discussed in this section.

Benefits and Drawbacks of Comics

There is a general misconception in Western culture that comics and similar formats are only for fun and are therefore inappropriate for serious subjects. This has caused resistance to using comics for serious communication, "In the mainstream U.S. culture, comics were (and to a large extent still are) considered cheap entertainment: an unsophisticated and inferior product of popular culture, consumed by the young and the unenlightened" (Yu 1). However, there are many other countries where comics are extremely popular and commonly consumed pieces of entertainment and deemed appropriate for complex and profound stories. Even in the U.S. there are many examples of comics that tackle significant issues, and "The gravity of these issues and

the suffering of the victims did not seem to be diminished by the 'cartoon' associations of the medium" (Adams 134). Therefore, while comics can entertain their audiences, they can also educate and prompt their readers to think critically. The medium can certainly be used to entertain and may not require much analysis, but "comics are a medium and art form, manifest in various styles, and are not limited to humorous or exaggerated renderings" (Yu 4). This variety alone lends itself to productive rhetorical analysis. Comics are becoming increasingly popular, and the genre is gaining more scholarly attention, "But the most prominent of these new forms is surely the graphic novel, which is making a name for itself as an important and legitimate genre" (Lunsford 28). While it is heavily debated what to call this genre and what the definition of the genre is, it is clear that comics are significant to American culture and many other cultures around the world. This is because comics have several benefits such as opening readers up to new ideas, allowing them to make connections for themselves, increasing comprehension and learning, and influencing opinions.

To begin, it is important to understand how comics welcome readers to learn more about a controversial topic. This is crucial to my analysis since, as will be discussed later, wolves are a hot-button issue. Since comics are typically thought of as a fun medium, readers do not expect ulterior motives, such as education or persuasion, "Because readers see comics as poetic rather than rhetorical, as being concerned with entertaining rather than persuading, they tend not to erect defenses in reading comics, which means comics have 'significant potential for pervasive, subconscious persuasion' (Turner, 1977, p. 27)" (Yu 8). This allows readers to keep an open mind when coming into a comic and they are less likely to immediately reject the information being conveyed. Something that was deemed a weakness of comics can actually be a strength. This means that comics with a specific goal to persuade readers to do something or think a

certain way can do so covertly, and "Even readers who are suspicious or hostile to a given topic may think that comics are 'harmless,' so they do not immediately mount a defense or shut down the communication (and the persuasion) process" (Yu 219). As will be seen later, propaganda in comics can be very covert and can often be mistaken for education. The reason that propaganda and education can go together in comics is because audiences are allowed to make their own connections in the material, so by providing information thinking can be changed. This can make it seem like they produced the idea on their own or enhance learning, both of which can be more persuasive.

As mentioned previously, comics rely on closure for readers to understand the meaning of the piece. This requires them to synthesize relationships between the elements and "visual elements could serve as transitional links between concepts or ideas. They could also compare ideas or show parallel, hierarchical, subordinate, or coordinate relationships – all structural manifestations of critical thinking skills that form the basis of rhetoric" (Handa 133). This can result in subconscious learning and covert propaganda. Having visual language along with written language allows the reader to notice more, "The visual and textual elements of comics make them well poised to illuminate such ideologies: Quite often, the ideological underpinnings are literally drawn into the pages we behold, while other times what is not seen is as starkly revealing as what is seen" (Vie). These details can sometimes be missed in strictly written language but become more obvious with visuals. By allowing the reader to make more connections on their own, comics can be a handy tool for learning and persuading.

There is also the benefit of images in comics being able to convey more complex ideas, feelings, and situations easier than written text could do alone. It is easy to see examples of this all around, like how a good science textbook will have diagrams of the principles covered in

each chapter or how a CPR pamphlet would have illustrations to accompany the instructions. The same can be said for comics, "The multimodal elements that govern most comics literally help make visible networks of power and power structures, aspects of our world that can often be difficult to discern through alphabetic text alone" (Vie). This means that learning something, even learning the skill of critical thinking, could potentially be easier when taught via comics. The public can have a difficult time understanding scientific concepts, as evidenced by the number of people that believe climate change is a hoax or that the Earth is flat. So, comics could be a great way to explain complex scientific concepts to the general public. In this thesis, I will specifically be focusing on how information, both scientific and historical, about wolves is conveyed to readers through comics, though the significance of this work could extend beyond wolves.

Comics prove to be particularly effective at educating since they engage their readers both cognitively and emotionally (Yu 51 and Duncan et al. 140). Comics can not only educate but can also have tangible effects on readers, "Not only does comic's multimodal communication facilitate cognitive learning, it can help readers develop desirable affective learning outcomes" (Yu 188). One of the comics I use is an educational comic that has the clear goal of imparting knowledge, while the others are intended for entertainment but could be used in an educational setting. Both types of comics can increase cognitive learning and make learning interesting for readers. Educational comics achieve this by engaging the reader in several ways,

> From an affective perspective, comics' use of humor, multimodal communication, storytelling, character development, and appealing and familiar visuals helps to lower readers' affective filters and create a more comfortable learning environment. From a cognitive perspective, comic's multimodal communication facilitates learning through

multiple channels and may be especially appreciated by nonverbal learners; stories

provide a natural and engaging platform for knowledge transfer, upon which surrogate

teachers and learners provide scaffolding; metaphors and anthropomorphism can be used

to bridge reader's knowledge gaps; and various design and text supplement options exist

to maximize comic's educational effect. (Yu 215)

There are several elements that go into making an educational comic effective, and I will explore

this more when I analyze the educational comic in my selection. The primary element of comics

that can make learning so successful is that the use of visual iconography and closure requires

more participation from the reader than just written work does. This relies on Gestalt

psychology, which is a theory that "emphasizes that the whole of anything is greater than its

parts" (Britannica). This principle focuses on form, proximity, and closure, and discourages

breaking things down into individual units as humans tend to look at the whole picture.

Examining the whole picture can lead to better understanding, which can be a benefit here. For a

comic to make sense, the reader must engage with all of its parts, and this can lead to better

comprehension.

One negative of comics is that they are not always an appropriate medium for the topic of

communication. Comics should only be used when there is a benefit to reach readers and convey

information, "Depending on its audience, usage, and content, not all technical communication

will benefit from using the comics medium" (Yu 90). For example, if I were to make this thesis

into a comic, it would not work out well. It would either have to be an extremely long comic to

the detriment of my readers' time or I would have to cut out a lot of information to the detriment

of my readers' understanding. Both are less-than-ideal situations, so a comic format is not

appropriate for this work.

There is a substantial difference between how Euro-Americans and Native American represent the wolf in their stories and this will be discussed further in chapter two. At this point, I would like to note how comics as a medium can be treated differently in Euro-American and Native American cultures. As more Native American stories get told through writing, there remains the important question as to whether or not having the stories written in English is appropriate given the oral tradition of most tribes and the history of colonization. The English language was a major tool during colonial times to overwrite Indigenous people's culture all over the world. This raises questions as to how appropriate it is for Native American stories to be told using English. However, the alternative may mean losing these stories, histories, and traditions, so it might be best to preserve them in a less-than-ideal way. Incorporating a visual component might help retain some of the traditional ways of sharing these Native American cultural elements. Comics and graphic novels may be an effective way to do this, and "Indigenous comic book creators are themselves clearing new visual-verbal narrative space for articulating more complex histories, cultures, experiences, and identities" (Aldama xi). The ability of people of a culture to share and preserve their culture themselves is important to avoid bigotry and inaccuracies while also sharing their unique past, present experiences and hopes for the future. Another thing that makes comics an excellent method to do this with is that they are easily accessible to a large audience and can be very entertaining, thereby keeping the audience engaged. Comics are a wonderful way to convey Native American stories, and according to Kyle Bladow, "As combinations of verbal and visual modes, their textuality does not simply transcribe speech but works with their visual components to encourage audience engagement in ways akin to oral storytelling" (47). While comics are not entirely true to the oral tradition of Native Americans, it evokes enough of the same feeling to make it worth thoughtful consideration as a

valid method to share these people's stories. In part, Indigenous comics accomplish this by having multiple voices represented in them through the narrator and different characters being represented by different text boxes, "comics can represent the many voices typical to Indigenous narrative in distinct ways" (Clapper 240). This visual representation can correlate well to how stories can be told orally with changes in voice that do not always come across well in strictly written text. Comics not only allow for better comprehension and retention of information, but they can also provide a more appropriate medium for Native Americans to share their stories and culture. This will be elaborated more later during my discussion of the Indigenous comics I have selected.

Overall, the combination of visual and written language in comics results in interesting benefits of comics, such as enhanced learning, engagement, and persuasion. Comics are not appropriate for every setting, but they can convey complex and serious ideas. Native American culture is well suited for the comic medium as it is reminiscent of oral traditions. Now that the elements, benefits, and drawbacks of comics have been established, it is important to understand the science and history of wolves. In the next chapter, I will go over biology, political history, and past rhetoric about wolves.

A Brief Science and History of Gray Wolves in North America

In this thesis, I will specifically be discussing gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) and the subspecies (excluding domestic dogs or *Canis lupus familiaris*)[3] that can be found in North America. I will also be examining how Euro-American cultures and Native American cultures represent wolves in their respective comics. Gray wolves can be found all over the world and there are also some other *Canis* species in North America, however, including all of these factors would be too much to cover in a master thesis. I am also unable to go into great detail about the biology, political history, and past rhetoric concerning wolves because there is so much to go over and some of it is highly contested. Therefore, I will be giving background information that is necessary for my analysis of the rhetorical situation of the chosen comics, which includes some biological knowledge, political history, and rhetorical history about wolves.

Since wolves are a crucial piece of North American history, it is important to understand how they became so essential to not only political decisions but also how they became a staple to the cultures. Both positively and negatively, wolves are prominent characters in human history, "The violent interaction of three timeframes—historical, folkloric, and biological—explains the longevity of wolf hatred and the brutality of wolf killing, as well as the rise of wolf popularity" (Coleman 4). As Coleman's view of wolf history in North America is one of the bases of my work, it is important that I establish these three timeframes in reference to my specific focus here. This shift from the big bad wolf to an ecological hero is particularly interesting and a significant number of steps were required to get to the complex state of the wolf today. It can be challenging, yet vital, to keep track of the details of wolf history, "The cultural baggage at play

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[3] While dogs are significantly genetically similar to wolves and even exhibit some of the same behaviors of wolves, since they have been domesticated by humans for thousands of years, occupy a vastly different ecological niche, and have some substantially different behaviors.

in the discourse about wolf policies is so overwhelming that even an environmental historian can be excused for confusing the map with the territory. While in a strict sense we cannot go beyond having cultural perceptions of the wolf, it does matter how we treat the wolf in environmental history" (Tønnessen 81). As will be discussed in the following sections, there is a fair amount of debate over some details of wolf biology, history, and rhetoric, but all of these factors combine to create a messy situation that can be difficult to tease apart.

Biology of Wolves

The species *Canis lupus* belongs to a larger group often referred to as canines. Depending on the gray wolf subspecies, they can be different sizes, have different fur colors and patterns, and have varying hunting and eating habits. Predominantly, wolves are carnivores, and they can hunt prey as tiny as small rodents or as large as elk or bison. Wolves are pack animals, which has allowed them to hunt prey that is significantly larger than them and this is something that humans and wolves have in common, "Both prehistoric hunters and wolves are social hunters targeting large game" (Tønnessen 78). Both species being successful hunters means that there has been some competition between humans and wolves for the large game, though, for much of our shared history, humans and wolves have avoided each other.

Humans and wolves were both extremely successful species, as evidenced by their large ranges. They also share many other characteristics, "Of other traits that wolves and prehistoric humans have in common, Hall and Sharp mention the size and (family) structure of wolf packs vs. bands of early humans and sharing of food among the members of a pack or band" (Tønnessen 78). Similar to how humans have a family and a larger community to support and be supported by, wolf packs are typically made up of a breeding pair, their offspring from multiple

litters, and occasionally additional wolves that are related to one or both members of the breeding pair. What is particularly interesting is that wolf population numbers follow the trends of the population of the prey in their area, "With a single breeding pair in each family, wolves self-limit their offspring according to available food prey and climate conditions" (Peterson 13). Not only do wolves exhibit extraordinary social behavior, but they are also able to self-regulate their populations so that they are not draining their resources. Wolves are also generally considered to be intelligent animals, and "Biologists have since shown *Canis lupus* to be a highly intelligent species, capable of remembering detailed geographic information" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 202). All these factors demonstrate that wolves are a highly intelligent species and that they, like humans, are remarkably successful as a species.

Wolves have spread across the world in a similar pattern to how humans did, and "The fossil record supports the first appearance of wolves in Eurasia in the early to mid-Pleistocene, 1–2.5 Ma, and then in North America in the mid-Pleistocene" (Koblmüller et al. 1728). Wolves have been in North America for about one million years while humans have been in North America for just tens of thousands of years, though the exact number is still heavily debated (Gugliotta). Despite wolves being present when the first people came to North America, there was no significant competition between the two and they were able to live in relative harmony as "Humans and wolves scared one another, and their mutual unease kept the species apart" (Coleman 9). Wolves in North America only became viewed as a problem when Europeans began to colonize the continent. They were viewed as a threat in two ways: a threat to animals, whether they be livestock or game animals, and to human safety, even though this risk is doubtful to be based on facts (Tønnessen 82). Fear and self-preservation were two important factors in Euro-Americans' attempt to eradicate wolves from North America. Colonists did not

want their livestock, game, or family to be killed by wolves, however, it is a severe

misconception how much of a threat wolves pose to other living beings.

When it comes to livestock, some tall tales regularly circulate about how wolves are able

to kill hundreds of livestock in one night. For example, Lobo, a famous wolf that will be

discussed more later, once reportedly killed 250 sheep in one night with his pack. There are three

potential reasons there are reports of high kill rates, "(1) some famous wolves engaged in surplus

killing (Kruuk 1972) of livestock and game, (2) a few famous wolves were wild dogs or wolf-

dog hybrids, and (3) early authors exaggerated damage by famous wolves" (Gipson et al. 813).

Exaggeration of damage done by famous wolves is a highly likely explanation for why people

believe that wolves are mass killers, even though it is not based in truth, and "despite the

widespread belief that wolves kill and injure many livestock, only limited objective information

exists about wolf and livestock interactions" (Gipson et al. 809). Despite it being difficult to get

exact numbers on how many are killed by wolves, some data does exist, and, in the US, "A 2011

report from the Department of Agriculture documented that only 0.2 percent of all livestock

losses that year were due to wolf predation" (Peterson 12). Specifically in Idaho, "In fiscal year

2020, wolves likely killed 102 cattle and sheep, according to state investigators. That works out

to about one in 28,000 of the state's 2.8 million total cattle and sheep" (Main). While it is

difficult to say how accurate these statistics are given their age and the data collection methods

for these types of reports, it is still clear that wolves do not pose as large of a threat to livestock

as they are typically accused of. It is also important to remember that there are non-lethal

methods to mitigate the threat wolves do pose to livestock.

As for competition for game animals and the concern for human safety, these claims also

have little evidence to back them up. Similar to how there is likely exaggeration as to the high

kill rates of livestock by wolves, there is an exaggeration as to how many large game animals wolves kill, "Contrary to statements by the hunting lobby, new research shows that wolves are *not* really fierce competition for game animals" (Peterson 12). However, despite this, game predation is still a major argument against wolves. People fear that not only their animals (whether game or livestock) are threatened by wolves but that their family members will also be predated on by them. This is largely fueled by folklore about wolves targeting people (think of "Little Red Riding Hood" and other stories), however, "Wolves rarely attack humans, and they do not howl at the moon. (There is no record of a nonrabid wolf killing a human in North America since the arrival of Europeans)" (Coleman 3). Despite the fact that wolves do **not** pose a serious threat to livestock, other wild animal populations, and humans, Euro-Americans were still fearful of them and aimed to eradicate them from North America. The threat that they pose can be mitigated via non-lethal methods such as turbo fladry, security systems, guard dogs, and more (Peterson 125). Given that wolves are already a low threat and that the threat can be reduced in ways other than eradication, it is prejudice and fear that still fuels the push for wolves to be totally removed from North America.

Sometime after wolves were essentially eradicated from the lower forty-eight states it became clear that they were critical to their ecosystems. As top predators, wolves help control prey populations from getting out of hand. This is important as prey can cause serious damage to vegetation, soil, and water (Peterson 71). When prey animals do not have pressure to move and can freely reproduce without population control by depredation, they overgraze and can drastically change the landscape. Wolves can help by controlling prey populations, though the extent to which they do is still up for debate (Peterson 75). More information is found regularly

that helps clarify the effect that wolves have on the ecosystem as a keystone species[4]. Research is always being conducted to quantify these changes as well. One thing that is generally agreed upon though is that wolves are keystone species and the removal from and then subsequent addition to their native habitats caused trophic cascades. It is speculated that wolves keep elk populations healthy and prevent them from hanging out in one spot for too long and devastating plant species. This would affect other species that rely on vegetation. Wolves are likely to have several over-arching effects on ecosystems, and only the extent of these effects is still up for debate.

Political History of Wolves

Since colonial times in America, the wolf has been a controversial animal. Before that, Native Americans lived with wolves, either ignoring them and/or working around them, as "Neither wolves nor humans would have survived for millennia at each other's throats, and history shows that they did indeed coexist for thousands of years" (Coleman 8). Meanwhile, wolves had been eradicated from Europe for a couple of decades when the first set of colonizers came to North America, "This long, uneasy stalemate ended around 1500, when a rowdy assembly of people calling themselves the English managed to destroy all the wolves residing in their island nation" (Coleman 8). After the English eradicated wolves, the rest of Europe was close to follow, "Wolf extermination dates pockmarked the next five hundred years: Scotland in 1684, Ireland in 1770, Denmark in 1772, Bavaria 1847, Poland in 1900, France in 1927" (Coleman 8). Sentiment against wolves spread quickly because "Oblivious to the actual behavior of wolves, antiwolf people based their hatred on 'myths, tales, and legends'" (Coleman 3). These

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[4] A keystone species is "a species of plant or animal that produces a major impact (as by predation) on its ecosystem and is considered essential to maintaining optimum ecosystem function or structure" ("Keystone").

stories were already well known, so there was a predisposition against wolves from the beginning of the spread of eradication. European colonizers brought their hatred for wolves with them to North America, and they almost eradicated wolves in "the United States (outside Alaska and sections of Minnesota and Michigan) in 1950, and Mexico in 1960" (Coleman 8). The quickness with which these eradications occurred is particularly shocking when one considers that "Humans and wolves co-existed for millennia; then in a scant five centuries, humans drove wolves to the edge of worldwide extinction" (Coleman 8). This extreme population decline was only possible with a fierce push by people and the backing of governments to leave no wolf alive.

When Europeans colonized the Americas, they were set on taming the "wild land." They had brought their domesticated animals with them and needed to create a safe environment for them, "To save their beasts, Euro-Americans attacked the people, plants, and wildlife that threatened their property" (Coleman 10). This resulted in the persecution of Native Americans, the hunting of wild fauna (both predators and prey) to extinction, and the systematic removal of native flora. Euro-Americans changed the ecosystems of North America quickly to serve their needs. Despite being the invaders, Euro-Americans felt personally slighted when nature did not bend to their will. They felt particularly duped by wolves, "Yet, however delusional and convenient, the colonists' sense of themselves as beleaguered, and in some cases victimized, is pivotal to understanding the cruelty of wolf killing as well as the role of folklore in colonization" (Coleman 10). Ironically, Euro-Americans still desired to preserve some nature in the form of National Parks. While National Parks are often thought of as a refuge for all animals today, only certain animals were protected when National Parks were first established and wolves were not one of them, "Wolves ate game animals that visitors liked to see and hunters liked to hunt for

themselves. When wild herbivores grew scarce, wolves were hardly welcome dining on local cattle and sheep. Consequently, in the emerging vernacular of US national park preservation, wolves became enemies" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 341). Because of Euro-American hunting habits, wild prey numbers dwindled significantly, and wolves were forced to target a much easier food source, livestock. The domestication process of livestock made them less skittish and decreased their survival instincts, which in turn made them readily accessible to predators. Wolves targeting livestock was another reason to eradicate them, "The reported killing of cattle, sheep, and other domestic animals by wolves has been the primary justification cited for wolf control since the colonial period in North America" (Gipson et al. 809). Euro-Americans were remarkably successful in the killing of wolves and "The last pack in Yellowstone was 'cleaned out' in 1923, and the pups exhibited in a cage at Mammoth Hot Springs before being killed. *Canis lupus* had disappeared from Glacier by the end of the 1920s" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 341). Wolf eradication was a cause for celebration among ranchers, hunters, and the government. After all, wolves did pose a threat to livestock and game and at this time the main option to deal with them was mass killing. It would take much more scientific understanding and the development of nonlethal control methods for there to be multiple options. Once there were options besides eradication, it would take time for people's opinions to change and accept the new methods.

Part of the reason that wolf eradication was so successful in North America was that governments put bounties on wolves and offered substantial payment for wolf pelts. Various organizations also pushed for people to hunt wolves, "The American Cattle Ranchers Association duly encouraged Canadian citizens to assist the ranchers' anti-wolf crusade by diligent hunting" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 342). Many methods were

used to kill wolves, including some particularly cruel ones (like capturing pups and torturing them to lure adult wolves into traps) or ones that probably caused the death of other species unintentionally, "in the United States poison was extensively used, whereas Canadian conservation managers feared the impact of strychnine on non-target species" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 342). The poison could also hurt people and sometimes that was the intended purpose, like with the mass bison killings where Euro-Americans poisoned the carcasses to keep Native Americans as well as undesirable wildlife from being able to use the meat. The killing of wolves was cruel at times but ultimately extremely successful as wolves were essentially eradicated from the lower forty-eight states of the US halfway through the twentieth century, yet they would return.

In the same century of being driven to the edge of extinction, wolves were introduced to Yellowstone National Park and Idaho. How did this drastic change happen in just decades? Shifting opinions about wolves first began with stories of famous last wolves, like Lobo, and then were further supported by the development of ecological science, "The mythology of the last wolves engendered feelings of loss and longing at the same time that scientific observation of wolves generated evidence that contradicted the darkest vision of wolves as irredeemable murderers" (Coleman 13). These stories and a better understanding of wolves helped shift public opinion about wolves. While the eradication of wolves continued for several decades after these famous wolves were killed, the opinion shift started slowly, "The animals were vermin, but they were exquisite vermin" (Coleman 13). It took many more years of shifting economics, development of ecology, and new stories about wolves being shared for them to gain protection as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 and be considered for reintroduction. Science is often the main change that is discussed for this shift, "Ecological

science has often been lauded as integral to the rehabilitation of the wolf in post-1945 North America" (Jones, "*Never Cry Wolf*," 92), though Jones argues that stories about wolves also played a role in this shift. Many factors had to combine before wolves could become an ecological hero, "This shifting perspective arose due to two principal factors: first, a new sense of the importance of wolves as ecological agents, and second, a growing awareness of their rarity value" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 342). Sentimentality for the wild west led to some desire to preserve what was left, but people still resisted restoring it to its original state.

The first shift in policy happened in national parks in the US and Canada, as "Nascent murmurings about the value of predatory species from national park personnel took place in the context of the rise of ecological science in the 1920s" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 342-3). This harshly contrasts what they were instructed to do from the beginning of the park services and "Park rangers, previously schooled in predator killing, now received scientific literature stressing the merit of wild canines, and had to sign a statement confirming that they had digested the material" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 343). However, it still was not required to protect wolves until the "US preserves axed predator control in 1933; Canadian, in 1959" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 347). A large part of this stemmed from fear of wolves when park service personnel crossed paths with them in the wild, "Significantly, the time lag reflected less a fundamental difference in perspective and more the fact that when park managers faced actual wolves rather than ecologically benign ghosts, the mantra of 'leaving nature to it' seemed harder to apply" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 347). Wolves are indeed dangerous predators and not cuddly like their cousins, the domestic dog, so fear of them to a certain extent is logical and best for safety.

Despite these small changes in science, opinions, and policy, it took some larger cultural shifts before real change began to occur.

As North America became more developed and with more people living in urban areas, the big bad wolf became less of a concern as "Industrialization, urbanization, and immigration were producing a generation little acquainted with rural life" (Dunlap 57). Since people were less concerned about wolves preying on livestock they did not have, wolves became characters in stories that did not have quite the same hold on society as they did before, "Wage earners living in apartments own goldfish, not cows, and as the sting of livestock depredation faded from many Americans' lives, so did their hatred of wolves. The antiwolf consensus fractured, and the severing of the historical link between folklore production and property ownership underwrote this monumental shift" (Coleman 12). This combined with the desire for a natural world that was lost with the development of the West resulted in sentimentality towards wolves and other animals. The Wild West became romanticized by a generation of Euro-Americans that did not have to participate in the "taming" of it and "Younger, college-educated Americans living in cities tend to view wolves favorably, while older and rural Americans tend to see wolves in a harsher light" (Coleman 2). A large amount of the fear surrounding wolves slowly faded away with the shift in the type of labor and eventually, legal protections were put into place in the US to protect wolves, "The listing of the wolf under the Endangered Species Act (1973), and that legislation's mandate to restore previously extirpated species, added a legal imperative to bringing back the wolf" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 344-5). However, wolves were not going to be reintroduced under Reagan's presidency and it would take over twenty years before wolves would return to a part of their native range.

The fight for and against reintroducing wolves was divisive and at a stalemate for several years. The side for reintroduction had scientists and city-dwellers while the side against had ranchers and hunters, and "In Idaho, as in many states, the antiwolf voices were a minority, but they received a disproportionately high degree of media, political, and governmental attention" (Peterson 12). Since ranchers contributed vital products to the American economy, they were able to stall the reintroduction despite it having a large amount of support from other members of the public and scientific community. Part of this imbalance could also be because of the balance fallacy, which involves organizations, like news outlets, giving equal time and attention to both sides of an argument even though both sides do not necessarily have similar merits. However, eventually, a compromise was reached that allowed wolves to be reintroduced in Yellowstone National Park and Idaho, and "Beginning in 1990 wolf reintroduction moved forward, but the translocated animals would be an 'experimental non-essential population,' not an endangered species. Under the right circumstances—for example, if a rancher actually saw a wolf attack a calf—the animals could be shot with impunity" (Coleman 14). This allowed ranchers to protect their livestock and for wolves to be returned to their natural habitat. The wolf reintroduction was a monumental occasion and set the precedent for other predators to be protected and even reintroduced. It took a long time for wolves to become protected and then even longer for them to be reintroduced; however, eventually they were.

The political fight over wolves is still not over. They have done well in Yellowstone and Idaho, so there have been recent pushes to have them delisted from the ESA. In 2021, they were delisted until 2022 when they were again listed as endangered, though still excluding the experimental populations in Yellowstone and Idaho. Also in 2021, Idaho passed Senate Bill 1211, which allowed for up to ninety percent of Idaho's wolves to be killed in almost any

manner, "Not only will it expand killing of wolves in their dens, including pups, the legislation allows hunters unfettered right to set traps and snares on private property year-round, which can be lethal to other wildlife—not to mention humans and their pets" (Main). Wolf populations when this bill was introduced were estimated to be around 1,500, so this bill allows for the number of wolves to be decreased to 150. This will devastate the wolf population in Idaho and potentially cause larger problems in the ecosystem. While it is easy to assume that ecology has won and that wolves are safe, the battle over wolves' place in North American ecosystems is still precarious. Now that the biology and policy history of wolves has been covered, it is important to understand how past rhetoric (in various forms) influenced these decisions and ultimately decided the fate of wolves at different times.

Past Rhetoric About Wolves

From extremely negative to extremely positive, wolves have been demonized and deified. Wolf lore has found its way into many cultures all over the world. In this section, I will be focusing on European and Native American lore about wolves as well as modern examples of rhetoric about wolves. As I will elaborate on more, these cultures have significantly different views of the wolf,

> For thousands of years, *Canis lupus*, or the grey wolf, has proved a popular character in folklore. Native American medicine men related how lupine protagonists dispensed hunting lore to listening warriors or guided travellers safely out of danger. Parents in eighteenth-century Europe warned their progeny of lascivious canines that preyed on red-jacketed girls in the gloomy forest. North American pioneers, themselves entranced by

wolf howls in the woods, spun yarns about rapacious lupine killers with the capacity to

destroy hundreds of cattle. (Jones, "*Never Cry Wolf*," 66-7)

These cultural elements of wolves have significant power that can sway people to support or

oppose them. Wolves in stories are commonly used to represent the romanticization of American

history, "An intensely symbolic animal, the wolf has always been a popular character in folklore,

a creature representative of our fears and our idealisations of wilderness" (Jones, "Writing the

Wolf," 201). Wolf lore has survived for generations and many people are likely to have

preconceived notions about wolves based on the stories they were told when they were younger,

because "The truth about stories is that that's all we are" (King 2). Decisions about policy,

behavior, and opinions are based on people's experiences with wolves and few people have had

direct interactions with wolves so they must rely on stories instead.

Since Native Americans lived in relative peace with wolves for centuries, it is interesting

to explore their views of wolves. Of course, it is difficult to evaluate every tribe's relationship

with wolves as many stories were lost because of European colonization, and it is not good to

generalize for such a broad group of people. It can be tempting to label all Native Americans as

"noble savages" that are particularly in tune with nature, but that is a stereotype. In actuality,

Native American tribes had varied relationships with wolves, "Native Americans imitated, wore,

studied, revered, and killed wolves" (Coleman 46). Their views on wolves largely depended on

their lifestyle. If they were hunter-gatherers, they likely coexisted with wolves as there was

plenty of prey to go around before Euro-Americans began systematically hunting them to the

brink of extinction. If they were farmers and ranchers, they probably would have been wary of

wolves since they posed a threat to their livestock. Given this threat, they likely killed wolves

when they came across them or found other ways to keep their animals safe. What is fairly certain is that the goal of eradicating wolves came to America with the Europeans.

Wolves played various roles in Native American lore, from tricksters to vicious killers to skilled hunters that should be imitated, the portrayal of wolves was varied. Some Native American tribes revered the wolf and "Many indigenous peoples—from the Hopi and Navajos of the Southwest to the southern Cherokee and Seminole, the northeast Penobscot and Algonquian to the midwestern Chippewa tribes—believed the wolf was a spiritual guide and ally" (Peterson 14). Others viewed the wolf differently, "Meanwhile, creation myths imparted by indigenous shamans attested to the wolf as a historic character in North American storytelling. The Tlingit of Alaska believed that they descended from two wolves that shed their skins to become human, while 'Big Wolf' of Blackfeet mythology imparted essential hunting skills to the tribe" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 202). The variety of wolf portrayals can be seen in the sample of Indigenous comics I analyze later in this thesis though they all provide a unique perspective into how Native Americans viewed the wolf differently from how Europeans did. This in part can explain the different approaches the two cultures took toward the animal.

Europeans also had a complicated relationship with wolves, but one perspective is what made its way to America. Despite this, it is worth exploring the variety present in European wolf lore. There are some positive portrayals of wolves in these stories, but there are also negative ones, "Old World legends recounted how Romulus and Remus were suckled by a maternal she-wolf, while fables attributed to Greek slave Aesop branded lupine animals as wily. Medieval fairytales and fiery religious dogma defined wolves as demoniacal, lascivious and thoroughly brutal forms" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 202). This variety across Europe and time periods mirror the variety that can be seen in Native American lore. Yet this shifted as more recent lore

paints a picture of the big bad wolf, "In most of the western European popular cultures, the wolf symbolises evil, bottomless hunger, and raw sexuality" (Tønnessen 77). Most of these ideas likely came from the bible, "The biblical vision of wolves with its focus on greed, corruption, and theft flourished in New England while other European traditions seemed to decline" (Coleman 42). Since this was the perception of wolves when Europeans first began colonizing North America, it is the portrayal that they brought over with them. The Grimm Brothers' fairy tales were also substantial to Europeans' preconceptions about wolves, as stories such as "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Three Little Pigs" have left lasting impressions even today, "the figure of the wolf of the nineteenth-century Grimm version continues to loom large in the current wolf controversy as a powerful metaphor of a cunning predator and continues to be equally powerful stand-in for the wolf in the discourse that speaks for or against the return of the biological wolves" (Lappalainen 763). European folklore about wolves was brought over by European colonizers and influenced how colonizers interacted with wolves. Fear of the wolf, in part fueled by lore, was a significant contributing factor in the push to eradicate wolves in both Europe and North America.

European colonizers brought their hatred of wolves via stories with them to North America. Their views on wolves sharply contrasted the views of Native Americans, "No longer fellow traveler or revered hunter, the wolf was reinvented by nineteenth-century settler communities on both sides of the 49th parallel as pariah, unwelcome competitor for game, rapacious stock-killer, and demonic symbol of the untamed wilderness" (Jones, "From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero," 340). This shift was dramatic and caused by how the two different cultures used wolves in their lore. Stories about the big bad wolf fueled fear of wolves, an animal that was generally able to avoid humans and still get to livestock, "Livestock and folklore

mediated the encounter between wolves and humans. Wolves had a ghostly presence in colonial landscapes" (Coleman 9). The lack of interaction between humans and wolves might have contributed to the tall tales spun about the canines. Fear of the unknown was a primary reason for the mass killing of wolves. In colonial times, "Folklore fueled wolf hatred through rituals and legends codified into motifs and transmitted by word of mouth. Wolf lore survived by being remembered and retold, while property in the form of livestock also traveled across landscapes and lifetimes" (Coleman 5). Wolves do present a legitimate concern for livestock and as European colonizers were already predisposed to hate wolves, they were quick to begin systematically hunting wolves.

Euro-Americans expected North America to be a land of new hope and that it would be easy to "tame," however, "Wolves disrupted these plans. They ate free-ranging herbivores and came to symbolize the maddening tendency of colonization to both surpass expectations and dash them" (Coleman 11). Given the colonizers' goal to make North America a land that worked for them, "Americans killed wolves to safeguard domestic animals; folklore gave these killings cultural and social meanings. As folk villains, wolves symbolized the frustrations and anxieties of colonization, and the canines paid in blood for their utility as metaphors" (Coleman 11). Again, wolves present a real concern for livestock, however, they became reliant on livestock when Euro-Americans removed other food sources from them, and colonizers still had biases against wolves before they arrived. Their being predisposed to think that wolves are evil led to the idea that wolves needed to be eradicated.

However, Euro-American stories that were being told shifted towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. During this time, the realistic animal story was popular in American cultures, "According to the 'realistic animal story' of the

early twentieth century, wolf society was moral, honourable, and benign" (Jones, "*Never Cry Wolf*," 67). Ernest Thompson Seton's story about Lobo is an excellent example of this shift and this story comes up in two of the selected comics. This was significantly different from Euro-American previous ideas about wolves, and it signaled a major shift in opinion about wolves and other natural world concerns. Stories by these authors were generally considered to be well-written and the public enjoyed them because, "writers combined biological observations with artistic prose to forge evocative depictions of non-human life" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 205). Combining art with a topic that people at the time were becoming sentimental about as the famous last wolves were slowly picked off affect how people viewed wolves. One reason these stories were so effective was that they focused on individual wolves instead of the species, "It also reflected a general tendency of pro-wolf stories to focus on the individual as a way to induce audience familiarity, identification and assist communication" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 206). In general, it is much more difficult to hate something after having developed an emotional connection with it and that is what these stories did. During this time there was a general trend among Euro-American literature to be more environmentally minded and wolf stories are a prime example of this, "By stoking an emotional engagement between reader and wolf, fiction proved to be a powerful force in promoting inter-species empathy and ecological consciousness" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 227). This is a strategy that is still used today in environmental propaganda. For example, documentaries about animals or an ecosystem often follow an individual animal (typically one that is given a name) to emphasize their struggles and build a personal connection between the audience and the cause.

      This early pro-wolf literature was popular after Yellowstone was made the first national park, and "From the late nineteenth century onwards, stories heralding the wolf as a four-legged

hero redefined popular attitudes towards wildlife" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 227). These stories added to the Euro-American lore surrounding wolves and they could now be more than the big bad wolf, "The tales they told about wolves allowed readers to connect with the animal, in the process forging a positive wolf fairytale based around strong individual personalities and the culture of the pack" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 227). In order for wolves to stop being demonized, it took not only a shift in scientific understanding and economic concerns, but it also took new stories being told about wolves that portrayed them in a different way that could open people's minds to the possibility of wolves being an interesting animal that was worth saving. There was some pushback against these stories because of the idea that wolves were individuals, "A hundred years ago, nature writers William J. Long and Ernest Thompson Seton caused controversy by claiming that their writings were accurate representations of natural history. Their depiction of wolves sparked a debate over whether animals are individual creatures subject to learning or instinct-driven specimen" (Tønnessen 80-1). There is still debate today as to whether this individualism is accurate and if anthropomorphism is beneficial to environmental causes. I would argue that these methods are useful since, historically, forging a connection between nature and humans through storytelling has made people more receptive to protecting that nature. Even science has begun to recognize the role of individuals in both how they tell the story of their research and how variance between individuals can influence their results (Preston). Individual stories allow individual people to connect more with the content.

Realistic animal stories were only the beginning of the shift and there was still a fair amount of change that needed to be made before wolves would be protected. While Seton was praising Lobo for his intelligence, courage, and loyalty, President Theodore Roosevelt was calling wolves "beasts of waste and desolation" (Roosevelt 213). Opinions about wolves at this

time were diverse, and "Such variegated definitions of canine temperament attest to shifting cultural attitudes over the direction of modern society, the place of humans in nature and popular environmental thinking" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 203). It took some time for the tide to turn for wolves, but eventually, it got there as the science of ecology was developed, people's relationships with nature shifted, and new stories were shared about wolves. This change can be tracked through stories and rhetoric surrounding wolves, "Narratives about the wolf reflect changing cultural ideas, technical expertise, environmental values and ethical judgments" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 204). Finally, the most notable shift in wolf opinion happened in the last half of the twentieth century, well after Seton first released his story about Lobo, "Since the post-1945 environmental revolution, writers have used the wolf as a symbol of sacred ecological vitality" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 202). The next big shift came with the lead-up to the reintroduction of wolves and "the landmark return of the wolf to Yellowstone in 1995 signaled not the revolt of science against the allied forces of folklore, ritual, and prejudice but the emergence of a new story about *Canis lupus*" (Jones, "Writing the Wolf," 203). It was a slow process to rehabilitate the wolf from the European folklore that demonized them, however, eventually, the shift happened, and it led to not only changed opinions but also changed policy. As mentioned in the introduction, this shift may have gone too far, and some people do not want any population control for wolves. Population control is an important part of maintaining healthy ecosystems and wolves, like any other animal, can over-populate, which can result in serious problems for all species, including humans.

At this point, it would be helpful to review some of the major rhetorical tools used in stories and arguments about wolves. These include classical rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) as well as more specific strategies like anthropomorphism as mentioned earlier. Some

substantial research has been done to categorize how people on either side of the wolf debate use classical rhetorical appeals to make their points,

> Arguments of pathos focus on popular emotions about wolves. Opponents portray them as conniving and thieving, while proponents paint them as family-oriented and loving. Arguments of ethos focus on the motives of those proposing and opposing introduction. Opponents claim proponents do not care about economic losses, while proponents claim opponents are selfish and uncaring about future generations, of maintaining nature the way it was meant to be. Arguments of logos focus on what scientific research shows us to be true about wolves. Proponents point out that wolf packs mimic human families, while opponents point to the number of sheep and cattle lost to wolf predation. (Hardy-Short and Short 66)

Both sides use pathos, ethos, and logos to support their argument but in vastly different ways. How wolves are talked about is important since rhetoric can greatly influence people's opinions which ultimately causes changes in policy. It is particularly important how prominent experts and programs talk about wolves, "The way wolves are characterized, particularly by state wildlife agencies/interest groups and politicians, may ensure its continued ambivalence both in terms of definitional clarity and in terms of its socio-ecological role" (Phillips 448). With the status of wolves still up for debate, it is important to remember the history of wolves in North America as well as past and present rhetoric surrounding wolves. The environment is in a precarious position and the fate of wolves among other animals will determine the state of ecosystems.

Currently, rhetoric about wolves includes bumper stickers, ads, and other easily distributed mediums. Both pro-wolf and anti-wolf groups utilize these formats to spread their

message and persuade audiences. Pro-wolf propaganda can show positive images of wolves, such as wolves with pups and trotting through a forest. Anti-wolf propaganda can show images of wolves being killers and threatening. A famous slogan associated with those that are anti-wolf is "Smoke a Pack a Day" which refers to killing a pack of wolves a day. This slogan can be seen on bumper stickers with clipart of wolves with the crosshairs of a gun centered on them. This is giving explicit instructions for the eradication of wolves. Another interesting piece of modern anti-wolf rhetoric is the comparison of wolves to unauthorized immigrants since the wolves that were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho came from Canada. Examining the current rhetoric in forms such as stickers, ads, and other easily distributed mediums about wolves could be expanded into its own interesting research project, but it is too much to cover in this thesis.

These problems do not only apply to wolves as similar trends can be seen with other environmental concerns. Evaluating the history of the rhetoric surrounding wolves can help us understand how to handle present and future discussions of not only rhetoric concerned with wolves but also rhetoric concerned with other animals, natural resources, places, and more, "Better awareness will not only provide insight into similar controversies but will foster better understanding of conflicting realities between economics and the environment in general" (Clarke 124-5). Rhetoric is a powerful tool and analyzing how it has been used as well as discussing how it should be used is important in the world of ecology and is currently understudied. Part of this likely comes from the rejection of rhetoric based on the assumption that it is only something that politicians and liars use to get what they want. Science typically avoids association with rhetoric because of this misconception, however, it can greatly benefit the goals of science to use rhetoric to its advantage. There are hints at a shift in perspective

concerning these issues in the scientific community based on the use of more personalized stories to convey information to the general public. However, it will take time for a new norm to be established if one ever does.

Overall, I argue that it is important to approach topics related to the environment, like wolves, with a degree of neutrality as "Animals and humans are neither intrinsically sinister nor essentially angelic. Both deserve to be understood on their own terms" (Coleman 4). Painting either as heroes or villains does an injustice to both and does not progress the conversation, it simply reverses the roles. Idealizing the wolf can also lead to disappointment when the reality is different, "If writers create the wolf in order to save it, what happens when the animals roaming the material landscape fail to satisfy human expectations?" (Jones, "*Never Cry Wolf*," 93). It is important that the wolf remains a complex character to reflect the complexity of the biological animal. How wolves will be portrayed in the future is difficult to predict, however, "Only two things are certain: the age-old imagery of the wolf will survive for further centuries—at the very least in subcultures—and new meanings will emerge which, whether or not they accurately mirror actual wolf ecology, somehow capture and express cultural developments" (Tønnessen 97). Only time will tell whether wolves will still have a place in ecosystems and what role they play in various cultures.

In summary, wolves have a rich history of rhetoric that has only been partially covered in this section. It may appear that the stories we tell about wolves should not influence decisions for policies concerning wolves, but that is not the case, and "Although the political struggle over ideologies takes place in human discursive space, the image of the fairy tale wolf has direct influence on the biological wolf" (Lappalainen 761). Stories have a strong influence over opinions and actions. There are many representations of wolves now, and "The wolf is a symbol

of large carnivores, governmental interference in local issues, freedom, and authenticity, evil, hunger, sexuality, etc." (Tønnessen 76) plus so much more. The variety of wolves present in stories allows for the complexity of the biological animal to be made apparent to those that interact with the stories. The rest of this thesis will examine a newer form of storytelling, comics, and how this multimodal form influences the audience's understanding of wolves.

This chapter has gone over the biology of, the political history surrounding, and past rhetoric about wolves only briefly. There is much more that could be added to this chapter and entire books have been written on these topics. I have only covered what is necessary for the development of this thesis and my analysis of the selected comics, particularly their rhetorical situations, in chapter three. It is important to understand that wolves are keystone species that can greatly affect their ecosystems and that the threat they present to livestock can be lessened in non-lethal ways. There have been times when wolves were ignored, actively eradicated, and then reintroduced in the political history of North America. Recently, there has been a lot of back and forth with the status of wolves as an endangered species and their place in Idaho is particularly precarious. Stories significantly contribute to opinions about wolves and those opinions ultimately shape policy and action. In the next chapter, I go over my methodology for the analysis, my results, and my discussion on the significance of my results.

Wolves in Selected Comics

In this chapter, I will discuss my methods, which include evaluative coding and mythic criticism, and my results. To begin, it is important to preview the comics I will be analyzing. First, there is *Howl: A New Look at the Big Bad Wolf* which is an educational graphic novel that gives an overview of the history between humans and wolves. Then there is "Lobo: King of the Currumpaw" which tells the story of Ernest Thompson Seton hunting one of the famous last wolves and how he came to be an advocate for wolves. One of the Native American trickster tales, "The Wolf and the Mink," is about a selfish mink that does not want to share food with his guest, the wolf. The mink attempts to trick the wolf so that he does not have to share but instead gets tricked by the wolf. The other Native American trickster tale, "Giddy Up, Wolfie," follows a rabbit who has fallen in love with a female wolf. The wolf at first is more interested in eating the rabbit, but once the rabbit manages to trick her into thinking that he can ride her mate like a horse she becomes romantically interested in the rabbit. Finally, is another Native American story, "First Hunt," which is a coming-of-age story about a young hunter who has a nightmare about werewolves and then real wolves while out hunting. The hunter is shocked that the wolves do not attack him and that they are so different from what he thought they were. These stories have some similarities and differences and provide an excellent opportunity for analysis and comparison.

Methodology

In my analysis of these comics, I will be using Saldaña's qualitative coding, specifically, evaluation coding, which involves applying "non-quantitative codes (e.g., +/-) to qualitative data for the evaluative purpose" (Onwuegbuzie et al. 137) to determine the scientific accuracy, type of representation, and extent of Euro-American bias in the individual comics. I use this as the

basis of the scales, which are defined below. As it is difficult to determine whether the scientific accuracy, type of representation, or Euro-American bias criteria is more important when considering representations of wolves, high and low net scores are not very meaningful to my research. Instead, I will be comparing individual scores in these criteria to evaluate if there is any correlation between them.

> *Scientific Accuracy* – 1 (not accurate at all) to 5 (primarily based on scientific facts)
>
> *Type of Representation* – 1 (negative portrayal) to 3 (neutral portrayal) to 5 (positive portrayal)
>
> *Euro-American Bias* - 1 (not based on Euro-American ideas/stories at all) to 5 (heavily based on Euro-American ideas/stories)

To determine scientific accuracy, I will be relying on my previous biological and ecological knowledge of gray wolves, which includes, but is not limited to, their ecological role in North America, physiological and anatomical characteristics (like size, diet, appearance, etc.), and their social dynamics. For each of my primary sources, I will determine whether these scientific facts are included, omitted, or directly contradicted (i.e., a source claims that wolves are herbivores when they are carnivores). I will also consider if the wolves are anthropomorphized, which can result in varying degrees of scientific inaccuracy. For example, if a wolf is shown with a facial expression that we might consider to be human-like, that does not necessarily make the comic scientifically inaccurate. On the other hand, if a wolf has dialogue or unlikely friendships with other animals, then that is more inaccurate. Depending on the amount of factual information that is omitted or directly contradicted, I will rate the source on the scale defined above.

When it comes to determining if a portrayal is positive, negative, or neutral, I will be relying on Coleman's ideas which are discussed in chapter two. I will determine if wolves are canonized (i.e., they are the protagonist or hero of the story), demonized (i.e., "the big bad wolf"), or portrayed neutrally (i.e., secondary characters or scientifically accurate). When considering this scale, it is important to take a holistic approach as some comics begin with wolves being portrayed one way but end with them being portrayed another. The goal will be to think of the main take away of the representation will be. I will rate the type of representation on the scale defined above.

Finally, Euro-American bias will be fairly easy to identify since comics are typically based on real events or a specific folktale. Researching the creator(s) of the comic will help determine some of the cultural background of the comic. Evaluating the publishers, containers, and locations of the comics will also be useful in determining the influence of Euro-American ideas. I will be able to research the inspiration of the source to determine how much Euro-American ideas influenced it and rate it on the Euro-American bias scale defined above.

McCloud's principles will be applied to my analysis of the comics, particularly his points on how images and words work together in varying proportions to create different communicative effects with the reader. I will also be using general rhetorical principles, such as lighting, contrast, color, etc., to support my conclusions about the comics. I will also be applying mythic criticism to these comics as "Mythic criticism is a type of rhetorical criticism that examines a given text for its culturally symbolic meanings" (Duncan et al. 341). This will prove extremely useful as wolves are animals with rich symbolism, as I discussed previously.

I will also be considering what prompted the communicators to create their comics. Therefore, Bitzer's rhetorical situation can be applied to this work as well and is defined as such,

"Rhetorical situation may be defined as a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence" (Bitzer 6). This is important to consider as these comics are inspired by different things, like folklore from different cultures, questionably true stories, and scientific concepts. It is also important to consider the background of these communicators as some belong to Native American tribes and others to Euro-American cultures. As discussed above in the second chapter, there is a significant difference between how these broadly categorized cultural groups viewed and treated wolves both historically and in the present. Considering all of these elements, I will do evaluative coding and rhetorical analysis on the five comics I have chosen.

Results

In this section, I have the results of the evaluative coding of the five comics (see Table 1 and Figure 2 on the next page). In the discussion section, I will justify these ratings after my rhetorical analysis of each comic and then I will do an in-depth comparison between all comics. However, in general, *Howl: A New Look at the Big Bad Wolf* was the most scientifically accurate with a rating of five, while the other comics scored three or lower. "The Wolf and the Mink" was the most positive type of representation of wolves with a score of 4, with the other comics all having scores of three. Finally, not surprisingly, the three Native American comics had the least Euro-American bias, each with a score of 1 and "Lobo: King of the Currumpaw" was the comic with the most Euro-American bias. More details of these results will be explained in the next section.

Table 1. Results of evaluative coding for scientific accuracy, type of representation of wolves, and Euro-American bias of five North American comics.

Comic	Scientific Accuracy	Type of Representation	Euro-American Bias	Total
Howl: A New Look at the Big Bad Wolf	5	3	3	11
"Lobo: King of the Currumpaw"	3	3	5	11
"The Wolf and the Mink"	2	4	1	7
"Giddy Up, Wolfie"	1	3	1	5
"First Hunt"	2	3	1	6

Key:

Scientific accuracy – 1 (least accurate) to 5 (most accurate)

Type of representation – 1 (negative) to 3(neutral) to 5 (positive)
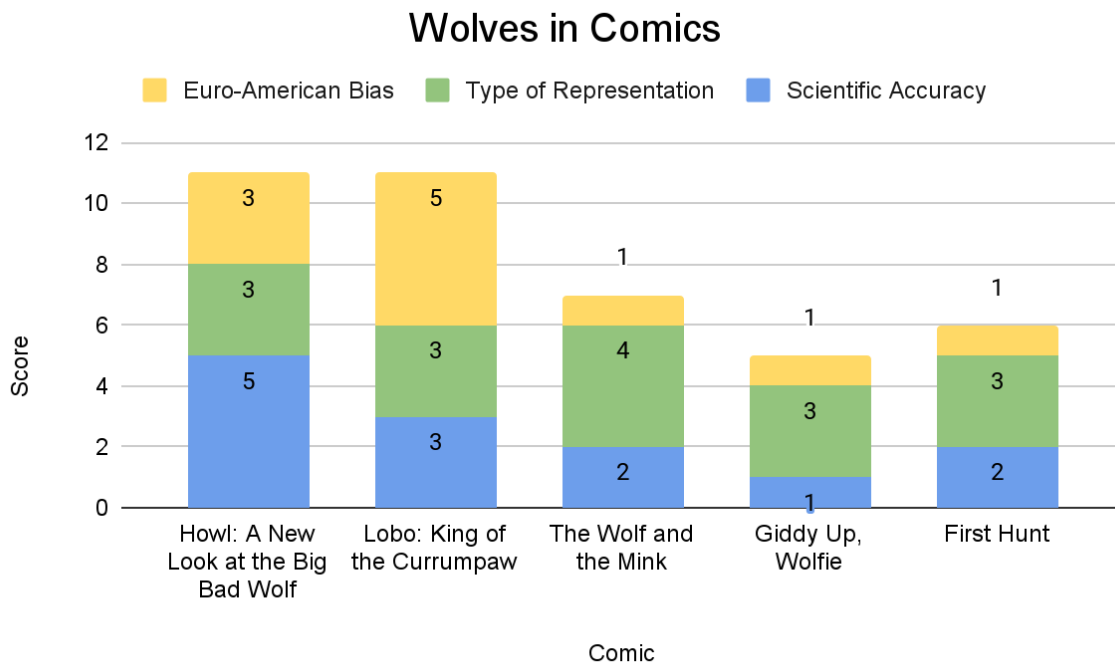
Euro-American bias – 1 (least biased) to 5 (most biased)

Figure 2. Graph of evaluative coding of Euro-American bias, type of representation, and scientific accuracy for five comics.

Discussion

In this section, I will discuss my selected comics individually and analyze how they depict wolves. I will also justify my ratings for scientific accuracy, type of representation, and Euro-American bias, which are given above. In general, I will be looking at how the comics use visual and written language, closure, scene setting, diegesis, and style to convey a story and meaning to the audience. Each comic will be analyzed individually and some connections between them will be investigated to try and determine if there are trends between them and my evaluative coding.

I will begin with my analysis of *Howl: A New Look at the Big Bad Wolf* by Ted Rechlin. This graphic novel begins in the late nineteenth century with the story of one famous last wolf in North America, Lobo. This story is interjected with snapshots of how policy concerning the Mexican wolf has changed. Lobo reportedly died from a broken heart after his mate was killed. Once Lobo's story is finished, the focus turns to Ernest Thompson Seton, the man tasked with hunting Lobo and his pack. Seton had a significant life experience (SLE) with wolves, and it turned him from a wolf hunter to a wolf advocate. After sharing the story of Lobo and Seton, the graphic novel moves on to another famous wolf, number 21. Now focusing on gray wolves, the story of wolf reintroduction to Yellowstone National Park in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. 21 is a famous male wolf that was one of the first wolves to be born in the park since their eradication from it. He was considered a "super-wolf" and helped lead a prominent pack, contributing significantly to the success of the reintroduction. 21 died of old age after his mate was killed and there are many parallels between Lobo's and 21's stories. In the next section, the comic goes back in time to when dogs first split from wolves to become man's best friend. Various myths about wolves are also covered here and how opinions about wolves have

changed throughout time. The final section of the graphic novel shows how far wolves have

come since their reintroduction in the 1990s. The ending emphasizes that wolves "are not good

or bad. They are animals, trying to live their lives" (Rechlin). Overall, this comic is a great

introduction to the complicated topic of wolves.

I would highly recommend *Howl* to those interested in wolves as it is a phenomenal

educational comic. Because of the nature of educational comics, some nuance is missing,

"educational comics need to avoid lengthy text and instead use text fragments and visual

support" (Yu 202). This comic negotiates this predicament well, though it should be viewed as a

starting point for learning about wolves, not an exhaustive text. However, it is great for those that

desire a condensed and far more entertaining version of the second chapter of this thesis.

The main elements of *Howl* that I will be closely examining include style, color, scene

setting, closure, and classical rhetorical appeals. First, the style of *Howl* is cartoon-like with

some photo-realistic backgrounds. At times this makes the characters stand out in sharp contrast,

and this may encourage readers to mentally separate the characters from the physical

environment. The physical environment may also be familiar to them, but having the characters

as cartoons may cause defamiliarization. Once readers are defamiliarized with the animals and

humans in this graphic novel, they may be more open to the ideas that are presented. Wolves are

a controversial topic so by forcing the reader to take a step back the comic encourages readers to

keep an open mind. Another element of the comic style is that when a wolf's eyes can be clearly

seen, they are made to look like they are glowing. This is an intriguing choice as it is reminiscent

of the fear of glowing eyes shining out from the darkness. Throughout this graphic novel, it is

used in various ways to invoke different emotions from the reader. The unique style is likely to

set up certain expectations for the reader that could make them more receptive to being presented with new, and potentially challenging, information about wolves.

Howl is a mostly colorful comic but there are points where the color is noticeably muted or removed. This can emphasize an important moment in the story and/or comment on the content. For example, in one section there is anti-wolf imagery in black and white at the top of the page, and then just below that is a full-color image of a wolf. These images sharply contrast each other and suggest that anti-wolf ideas are outdated and wrong. There are also places where the images are so colorful that they are likely to grab the attention of the reader, which is the case for the first page. Color can hook the reader and make them want to read more of the graphic novel, but it can also convey meaning to the readers.

The comic also uses written and visual language for the scene setting. Years and exact locations are given along with images that help establish the environment in which the story takes place. This is particularly handy since this comic follows several different stories in various locations and at different times. Without both clearly stating parts of the setting and showing others, the reader could become confused by how much the story jumps around. It also helps that the comic is divided into sections, made clear by black pages with white text titling each section. Having these physical divides along with an excellent scene-setting allows the reader to keep track of the complex history and stories that are being shared in the comic.

Howl has some cliffhangers that require the reader to use closure to understand what happens. An excellent example of this is how the comic side steps the death of wolves to make it more appealing to readers while still getting across the important plot point. At one point Seton, after many failed attempts to catch Lobo, decides to go after his mate, Blanca. Seton manages to catch Blanca and then kills her, though this is kept non-graphic by aspect-to-aspect sequencing

(McCloud 72). By excluding the more gruesome details of some of these stories, Rechlin keeps the audience engaged and open to the main points of the comic.

Next, let us examine the use of classic rhetorical appeals, pathos, logos, and ethos, in *Howl*. Rechlin invokes pathos by telling specific stories, logos by sharing facts, and ethos by demonstrating a basic understanding of biology. By reporting stories of real wolves, the reader may be more inclined to sympathize with wolves and come to realize that they are real animals, not just mythological creatures. Rechlin also shares facts, such as how wolves are keystone species and what that means. Both of these elements also help build ethos. This makes for a well-balanced piece of rhetoric that is likely to persuade readers to view the wolf differently.

Finally, I would like to justify the scores I gave for *Howl*. For scientific accuracy, I gave it a five as it has very accurate information. There is some debate on certain elements of Lobo's story, but Rechlin cannot be blamed for reporting what Seton recorded. For the type of representation, I determined that it portrayed wolves neutrally, receiving a rating of three, primarily because of the final emphasis that wolves are neither good nor bad but simply animals. This aligns with Coleman's position, which I agree heavily with. For Euro-American bias, I rated it in the middle at 3 as there is an overview of a mixture of Euro-American stories as well as some stories from other cultures including Native American ones. Overall, this is a well-rounded source that addresses many of the factors that are a part of the complex topic of wolves.

The next comic I will examine is "Lobo: King of the Currumpaw," adapted by Mark Evanier, illustrated by Thomas Yeates, and lettered by Todd Klein. This comic is from a PBS series, Nature Comics. This comic, like *Howl*, includes the story of Seton hunting Lobo, but this time it is the sole focus of the comic. "Lobo" also uses scene setting, closure, and classical rhetorical appeals (primarily ethos and pathos) in a similar way to *Howl*, but it also uses facial

expressions significantly more. While *Howl* uses facial expressions to tell its story, it is not quite as prominent as in "Lobo." Seton's internal journey is conveyed significantly through his facial expressions as he initially is determined to kill Lobo and views him as a pest. As the story progresses, his expressions soften, and he is at times impressed by the wolf and eventually comes to feel remorse for what he is doing. The variety of facial expressions is able to convey so much emotion and add a whole other level of detail. The wolves also have facial expressions. This makes the reader establish a personal connection with these animals and can even elicit feelings of sadness when they are killed. Adding detailed facial expressions in the drawing of this comic enhances its pathos and makes it more likely to leave an impression on its audience.

The comic also ends with a real photograph of Lobo taken by Seton after capturing the wolf. This sharply contrasts with the drawn style of the rest of the comic, and it is fascinating to see what a legend like Lobo actually looked like. The photo is particularly striking as it shows Lobo with his legs in traps and looking defeated. This combined with the rest of the story and the emphasis at the end that Seton regretted his actions makes it likely that the audience will sympathize with Lobo and wolves in general. Having this photo of the real Lobo at the end will probably result in a longer-lasting impression on the reader of the comic.

As for the evaluative coding of "Lobo: King of the Currumpaw," there are some significant differences between this comic and *Howl*. First, I gave "Lobo" a rating of three for scientific accuracy. This comic is not focused on the science of wolves; however, it does not give outright incorrect information either, hence my decision to put it in the middle. As for the type of representation, the comic overall portrays wolves in a neutral light and therefore gets a rating of three. At the beginning of the comic, wolves are the enemy but throughout the story, as Seton realizes that they are not the devils he once thought they were, the portrayal of them becomes

more complex and neutral. Lastly, for Euro-American bias, I am giving this comic a rating of five since it is solely based on a famous story about a Euro-American. There is no other human present in this comic and no mention of how other cultures perceive wolves, so it is heavily biased toward the Euro-American view of wolves. Even though it challenges that view, it still begins there and does not move far beyond it.

Both Euro-American comics have the story of Lobo in them. Lobo is a famous wolf that often gets brought up in discussions of wolves in North America. Why is this story so popular though? How has it managed to become a legend? The main reason this story is famous is that it highlights a significant life experience (SLE) of Seton's, and these can substantially change opinions. Indeed, Seton's opinion about wolves did change substantially after Lobo's death, "Lobo dies of a broken heart after being trapped through his devotion to his mate, and his faithfulness moves Seton and transforms his view of the wolf" (Dunlap 60). As the story follows Seton's changing opinions about wolves the reader is able to go on the adventure with him, as "These effects reappear in their narratives as implicit, compelling and personal invitations to be considered and embodied by each reader, even readers that may not be keen on wolves and wolf tales" (Puig and Echarri 690). Seton begins on the anti-wolf side and changes to want to protect them, and this shift could be translated to the reader. SLEs are difficult to come by so it is important that similar experiences can be had in stories, "As for their readers, SLE are not 'controllable' in the sense of being caused or reproducible on demand. These SLE cannot be communicated as experiences – only as narratives" (Puig and Echarri 690). Seton's written account of his SLE with Lobo has been successful in convincing readers to reconsider their views on wolves, however, I think that Seton's story in comic form has even more potential to influence others. The addition of images to the story helps readers experience it more fully and

the modern adaptations are more likely to be accessible to readers as the style and language of Seton are old-fashioned.

One thing that is interesting to note is that Seton likely lied about how Lobo died. The story that Lobo died of a broken heart and refused to eat after he lost his mate is touching and appeals to the reader's sense of pathos significantly. Though this romantic story may not be true as "The skull of Lobo contains an unhealed gunshot wound between the eye sockets which provides a more plausible explanation for the death of this wolf than Seton's (1898:10) statement that he found the wolf dead, '...his body unwounded,' the morning after he captured the wolf and staked him out with a collar and chain" (Gipson et al. 813). Not only does this alternate ending paint Lobo as a compassionate animal, but it also paints Seton in a better light and decreases the chance of the reader being resistant to the whole story because of the brutal ending. Now, I debated decreasing the accuracy rating for the comics with the Lobo story in them as they tell the romantic version, however, I do not think it is their fault as Seton's version is the most well-known one and the creators of the comics may not have known about the more likely cause of death for Lobo.

The two Euro-American-based comics have the same total score; however, the individual categories vary some. For scientific accuracy, *Howl* has a rating of five for being most accurate since it directly addresses the science of wolves while "Lobo" has a rating of three for not being inaccurate but also not presenting much scientific knowledge. Both of these comics have fairly neutral portrayals of wolves in them, so they both received a rating of three on that scale. Finally, for Euro-American bias, *Howl* received a rating of three since it covers a variety of stories about wolves while "Lobo" received a rating of five as it is a story solely about a Euro-American's

experience with wolves. Overall, there are similarities and differences between the two Euro-American comics.

Now that I have analyzed the Euro-American comics in my selection, I will analyze the Native American comics that I have selected. I have three total Indigenous comics, two of which are trickster stories, "The Wolf and the Mink" and "Giddy Up, Wolfie," and one is a coming-of-age story, "First Hunt." These comics have similarities and differences between themselves and the Euro-American comics. I will begin with one of the trickster tales, "The Wolf and the Mink" as told by Elaine Grinnell, who is an elder, historian, and storyteller for the Jamestown S'Klallam tribe, with art by Michelle Silva. This trickster tale begins with the mink hunting for food. He is crafty and manages to catch two fish and cooks them up. Right as he is about to eat them, the wolf shows up so the mink must hold off on his feast or else he will have to share his food. The mink tries to trick the wolf into believing that he is not going to eat until later, but the wolf realizes that this is probably false so that the mink will not have to share. So, the wolf decides to trick the mink instead by telling him a long story to bore him to sleep. Once the wolf is successful, he eats both of the mink's fish and even puts the bones in the mink's mouth so that the mink will think he ate the fish when he wakes up. This ends up working and the story serves as a lesson to share food with guests. What is so interesting about this story is that the wolf is originally going to be the victim of the mink's trickery, but he turns it around and becomes the trickster. Ultimately, this makes the wolf the hero of the story because he made sure that the mink got what he deserved.

The wolf in "The Wolf and the Mink" is quite expressive to the point of hilarity. Through the wolf's expressions, the reader is able to understand his thought process and the significance of some of the events happening in the comic. For example, the wolf looks very annoyed when

the mink says that he is saving the fish for later (bottom right image). These images make it clear that the mink is in the wrong by not sharing his food with the wolf, his friend and guest. This anthropomorphism also develops a connection between the reader and the wolf, strengthening the pathos of the piece. The facial expressions of the wolf enhance the significance of this piece. The wolf is also somewhat of a silly character as evidenced by the story he tells to bore the mink to sleep. This story, accompanied by some funny flashbacks, involves the wolf being spooked by a deer and then them becoming tangled up and falling into a stream. This hilarious story adds to the tone of the piece and the personality of the wolf. Though the story is cut off before we find out what happened to the deer, which could drastically change the reader's view of the wolf. How the wolf is depicted in this comic is comical (pun intended) and could potentially make the reader relate to the wolf more.

As for the scoring of this comic and the other trickster comic, it is challenging to determine some ratings. First, I gave this comic a rating of one on the Euro-American bias scale. While it is possible that this story was at some point influenced by Euro-American culture as it got passed down from generation to generation to Elder Elaine Grinnell, there is no obvious evidence of such influences. Therefore, this comic has little to no European or Euro-American bias. Next, this comic is not very scientifically accurate as the animals are heavily anthropomorphized and a wolf is unlikely to visit a mink as a friend. I debated this rating in particular for a long time as it was clear that it was not very scientifically accurate, but it was not as inaccurate as it could have been. Therefore, it ultimately received a rating of two. Finally, for the type of representation, the wolf appears to be the hero of the comic, as he teaches the mink a lesson. However, the wolf is a trickster and that could reflect negatively on him, so the comic gets a rating of four for the type of representation. Overall, this comic approaches the wolf

extremely differently from the two previous comics, which was to be expected because it is a Native American story.

Next is another Native American trickster comic, "Giddy Up, Wolfie" as told by Greg Rodgers, a Choctaw/Chickasaw writer and storyteller, with art by Mike Short. In this comic, rabbit Chuckfi falls in love with a she-wolf who invites him over for dinner. Little does Chuckfi know that the she-wolf intends to eat him and interprets the invitation as a date, so he gets all cleaned up and even brings the she-wolf some flowers. The she-wolf is caught off guard by Chuckfi's proposal of a romantic relationship and explains that she already has a boyfriend, Wolfie. Chuckfi tries to convince the she-wolf that Wolfie is not as strong as she thinks and that Chuckfi can even ride Wolfie like a horse. Chuckfi disappears when Wolfie comes, and the she-wolf informs him of what Chuckfi said. Wolfie is outraged and hunts Chuckfi down, finding the rabbit with a thorn in his paw. Wolfie demands that Chuckfi come to tell the she-wolf that he was lying and offers to let the rabbit ride on his back. Chuckfi takes the thorn out of his paw and hides it behind his back before riding Wolfie. As they get close to the wolf den and the she-wolf emerges, Chuckfi uses the thorn to stick Wolfie and give the appearance of him riding Wolfie like a horse. The she-wolf sees and falls in love with the rabbit. This hilarious story shows wolves in many interesting ways from cunning to idiotic, romantically desirable to repulsive, and powerful to submissive. While this tale is clearly not based on a true event, its use of lighting, color, facial expressions, and gestures to convey a funny story about wolves is worth investigating.

To begin, the lighting and coloring of environments are used to convey safety or danger. Primarily, the wolf den is filled with shadows while the rest of the settings are bright and colorful. This conveys that the wolf den is dangerous, particularly for Chuckfi, while the rest of

the forest is safer. Having this physical shift in setting helps the reader understand that the she-wolf did not invite Chuckfi over to eat dinner but to be dinner. Readers are likely to already be suspicious of the invitation as it is not common for wolves to hang out with rabbits, but seeing the forbidding cave confirms their concerns. The darkness of the den gives readers an uneasy sense and they may even be sure that they are about to see Chuckfi be eaten, however, there is a return to the bright and colorful forest where Chuckfi is safer and even has the upper hand against Wolfie. This comments on the nature of wolves and their relationship with other animals. After all, it is important to remember that wolves are indeed carnivores.

Next, the facial expressions and gestures of the wolves in this comic do a great job of enhancing and progressing the story. The she-wolf is present in more of the comic compared to Wolfie and has a large range of facial expressions and gestures. The she-wolf looks devious, stoic, shocked, thrilled, and even in love at different times in the comic. The last panel of the comic has the she-wolf with heart eyes, to make it abundantly clear that she is now in love with Chuckfi. All of these expressions either comment on what is happening in the comic or add to it. The expressions can even contradict what is happening in the conversation, which allows the reader more insight into the meaning behind it. Wolfie, on the other hand, is in the comic less and has a smaller range of facial expressions and gestures. Wolfie is primarily angry or annoyed, usually with his teeth showing to make that clear. The she-wolf also bares her teeth at times, and it shows her intentions to eat Chuckfi. What is interesting about Wolfie's gestures is that sometimes he appears submissive to the rabbit, like when he lets the rabbit climb onto his back and when the rabbit pricks him. This flips the script on the normal interaction a rabbit and wolf would have. Combined, the facial expressions and gestures of the wolves in this comic make the story more interesting and complicated and can enrich the understanding of the reader.

As for the scoring of "Giddy Up, Wolfie," this one presented similar challenges as "The Wolf and the Mink." Since these are both trickster stories, the wolves in them are heavily anthropomorphized and therefore rank lower on some scales, though this should not reflect negatively on the comics. First, for scientific accuracy, I had to give "Giddy Up, Wolfie" a one as it was the least accurate comic I examined. There is more outright incorrect information in this comic than in the others, and the setup seems even more fictitious than in the other trickster tale. For the type of representation, I gave the rating of three as the two wolves are portrayed in such different ways that it ultimately balances out to neutral. Since Wolfie is the enemy of the main character, there are some negative connotations. On the other hand, there is the she-wolf that the main character has fallen in love with and idolizes, which has some positive connotations. Therefore, because of the complexity of the portrayal of wolves in this comic, overall, it can be seen as neutral. Finally, for Euro-American bias, it receives a one as this is a Native American trickster tale. "Giddy Up, Wolfie" portrays wolves in an interesting way that can be difficult to analyze on my defined scales. However, it certainly warrants analysis and provides a unique view of wolves.

Despite "Giddy Up, Wolfie" and "The Wolf and the Mink" both being Native American trickster tales, they are notably different. One has a wolf as a clear hero, while the other has two wolves that are portrayed differently. The storyteller for "The Wolf and the Mink" is Elder Elaine Grinnell, who belongs to the Jamestown S'Klallam tribe. The Jamestown S'Klallam tribe is located in the state of Washington. The storyteller for "Giddy Up, Wolfie" is Greg Rodgers, who belongs to the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes. The Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes are currently located in Oklahoma. These different tribes approach the wolf differently and I want to take time to emphasize that Native American is a broad term that is not very descriptive for

individual tribes' beliefs. It can be temptingly easy to lump all Native American tribes into one group and assume that they all had the same thoughts and feelings on all subjects, but that is an oversimplification.

The final comic I will be discussing is another Native American one, "First Hunt," though this one is not a trickster tale. Authors Jay and Joel Odjick are a part of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg community which belongs to the larger group of Algonquin. Jay Odjick is also the illustrator for this comic. According to the introduction of this comic, "The wolf in Algonquin storytelling is often used as a symbol of strength. In this story…the wolf is representative of the challenges the community faces, and the fear one boy has of the effects of an unsuccessful hunt" (139). This sets the scene for the events that are about to unfold in the comic, which begins with a dream sequence of a young man. He dreams of werewolves attacking him while he is out hunting, but when he is awake and actually hunting a deer the next day, he has a different experience with real wolves, a whole pack of them. At first, it appears that he is going to be attacked by the wolves and will have to fight for his life, but after some growling, the wolf pack stalks off and leaves the young man be. The young man is then able to collect the deer he successfully shot and is praised by his fellow hunters for it. His father compares him to the wolves and says that the reason they did not attack him could be because "maybe the wolf looked at your eyes...and saw himself in them. A hunter" (145). This shows that the tribe views wolves as strong hunters, which aligns with the introduction of the comic. The main element I will focus on for this comic is the difference between the werewolves and real wolves present.

What is so interesting about this comic is that it has both a fictional representation of wolves and a more realistic depiction of them. The werewolves are terrifying and since it is one of the first images we are greeted with in the comic, it seems like the story may be negative

toward wolves. This foreshadows that the young hunter will encounter wolves in real life and the reader may even be led to assume that the real-life encounter will be just as terrifying. Because of this setup, it may be surprising to the reader when the encounter with real wolves goes differently. The real-life encounter at first seems hostile but resolves with humans and wolves separating unscathed. This is more similar to what does happen in the wild and I would like to reiterate a previous point that nonrabid wolves are not known to kill humans (Coleman 3). Yet, I still would not recommend trying to pet a wolf in the wild. There is a panel that shows a real wolf snarling and looking like the werewolves at the beginning. However, this image is not dwelt on, and the wolf soon stops growling and then the pack moves on. This comic provides a look at a mythological creature that is to be feared and a biological animal that can coexist with humans. Similar to how the young hunter was fearful of wolves before getting to know more about the animal, many people fear what they do not know and wolves are an elusive species, often opting to avoid contact with humans rather than interacting with them.

When it comes to scoring this comic on my defined scales, "First Hunt" was complicated to determine. Beginning with the easiest score, for Euro-American bias, this comic received a one as it is a Native American coming-of-age story. For scientific accuracy, there is not much scientific information in this comic, and werewolves are mythical creatures, but the de-escalation of the encounter between humans and wolves is a possible interaction. Therefore, considering all of these factors, this comic receives a rating of two. Next, the type of representation is overall neutral as the werewolves found in the beginning are replaced by the biological animal. Wolves are also talked about with great reverence as being good hunters at the end, so ultimately these balances out to get the rating of three. This comic is unique in how it sets up readers' expectations and then dismantles them to reveal the true animal behind the myths.

Comparing "First Hunt" to the other two Native American comics is challenging as the types of stories are vastly different. The trickster tales anthropomorphize wolves heavily and use wolves to represent different human characteristics to teach moral lessons to the audience. The coming-of-age comic uses wolves as a tool to show the growth of the main character, who is human. All three stories are by different Indigenous people from different tribes, so it makes sense that they would approach the wolf differently. Again, I would like to emphasize that it is important to not lump Native American tribes into one group and ascribe one set of beliefs to them. Among other differences, every tribe has had its own set of experiences with wolves, and that ultimately influences how wolves are portrayed in their stories. Therefore, it is impossible to make a simple division between how Euro-Americans and Native Americans viewed wolves. It is even impossible to definitively state how certain tribes feel and felt towards wolves based on one comic, so I will avoid doing so.

Finally, to compare all comics against each other the evaluative coding helps see how they differ. Starting with scientific accuracy, this scale had the most variety in results (see Figure 3 on the next page). The most accurate comic was *Howl* with "Lobo" coming next. "The Wolf and the Mink" and "First Hunt" both received two, but for different reasons. "The Wolf and the Mink" had an unlikely friendship between two vastly different animals that were heavily anthropomorphized. "First Hunt" had werewolves and a real wolf encounter that reflects what could potentially happen in the wild but may not. The least scientifically accurate comic was "Giddy Up, Wolfie" as the animals in there were also heavily anthropomorphized and the interactions between wolves and the rabbit are extremely unlikely to happen. Now a comic does not necessarily need to be scientifically accurate, but it can be a contributing factor to how the readers interact with and understand the text and then transfer that knowledge to real wolves.
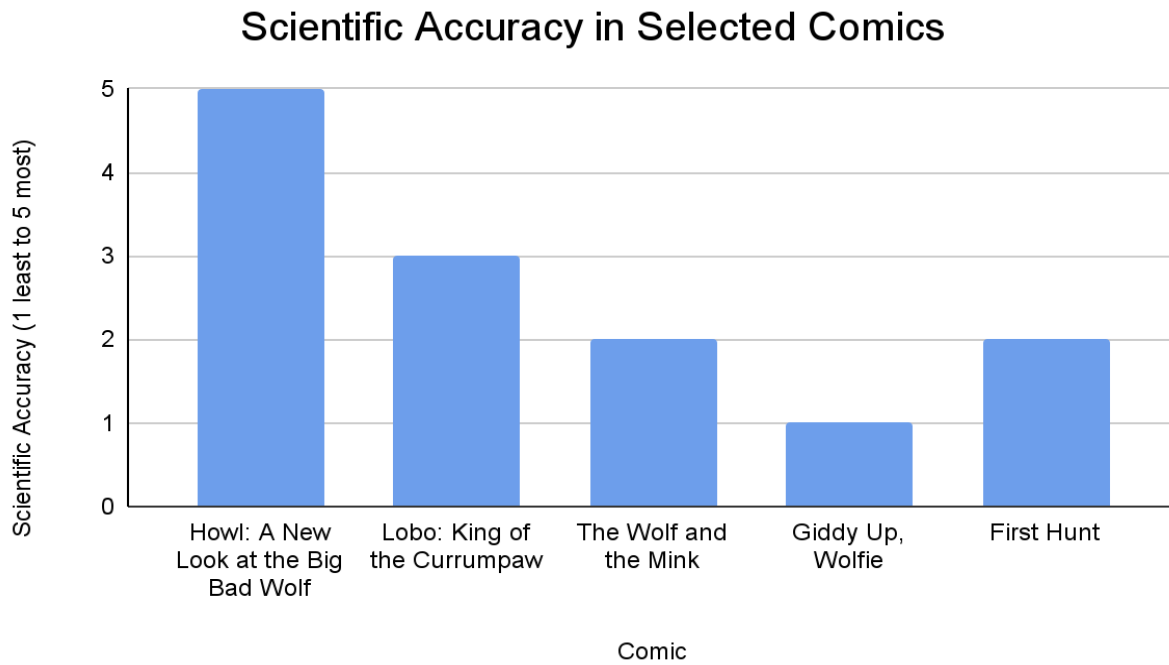
Scientific Accuracy in Selected Comics

Figure 3. Graph of evaluative coding of scientific accuracy for five comics.

Next is the type of representation, which has much more similar results (see Figure 4 on the next page). Only "The Wolf and the Mink" had a rating of four due to the wolf being the character that puts the trickster mink in his place. Every other comic received a score of 3 as the portrayal of wolves was either so complex to become or was already neutral. This was expected since the combination of words and images allows for more complexity to be shown and for readers to be able to notice those subtleties. It is fascinating to see that comics with such varying plots and approaches can result in similar types of representations.
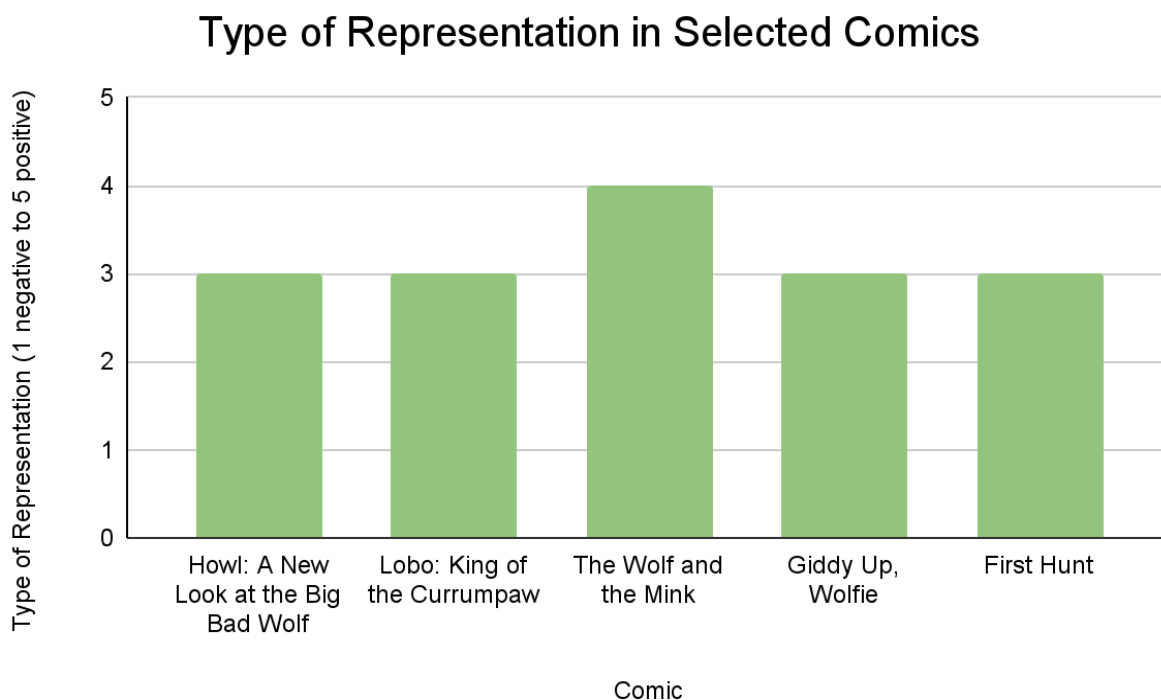
Type of Representation in Selected Comics

Figure 4. Graph of evaluative coding of type of representation for five comics.

Finally, there is Euro-American bias which has some clear divides (see Figure 5 on the next page). The three Native American comics received a rating of one in this category as these stories are assumed to be fairly traditional stories for their respective tribes. *Howl* received a rating of three as it goes over how wolves are represented in several different cultures, but it also primarily focuses on Euro-American and wolf history. Finally, "Lobo" is the comic with the most Euro-American bias as it focuses on the story of Ernest Thompson Seton, a Euro-American, and therefore how Euro-Americans view wolves influences the story heavily, even though Seton changes his opinion about wolves at the end. I was expecting this distribution when I first selected these comics, except for *Howl* which surprised me by highlighting other cultures' ideas of wolves.
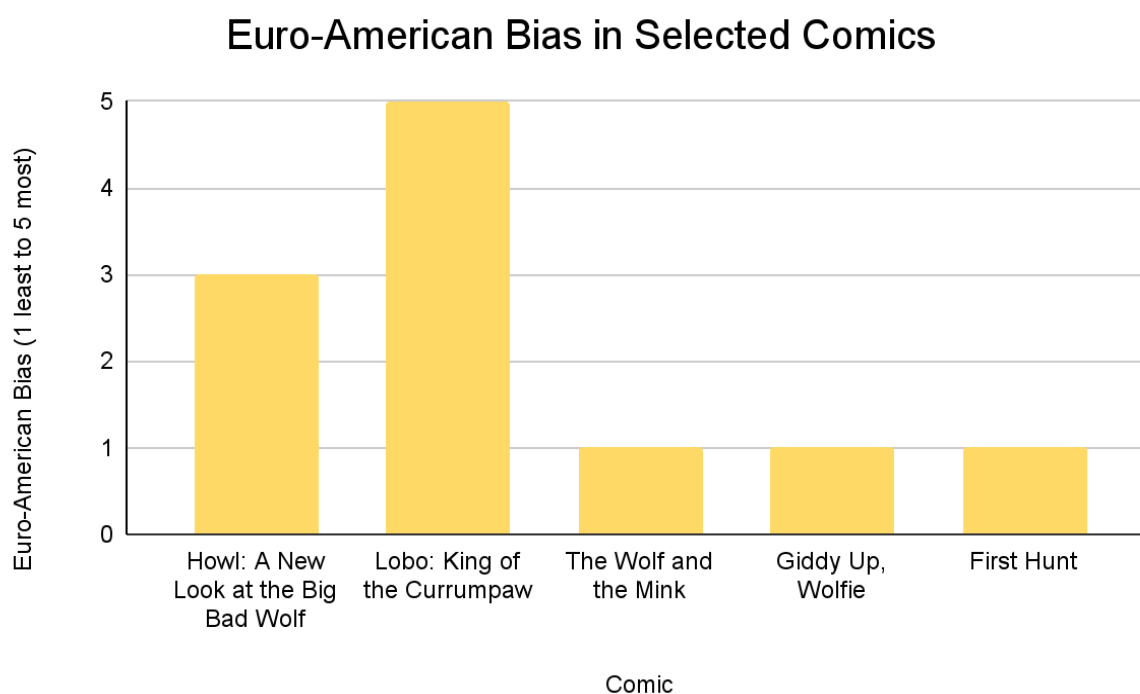
Euro-American Bias in Selected Comics

Figure 5. Graph of evaluative code of Euro-American bias for five comics.

Even though the five selected comics are unique, there are some general trends in their portrayal of wolves. Most of the selected comics used facial expressions and/or gestures of wolves to get meaning that comments on and progresses the story across to the readers. Comics can use visual elements, like lighting and color, along with the plot to invoke pathos. As each comic has a different rhetorical situation (depending on genre, cultural background, purpose, etc.), there are unique storytelling techniques that appeal to readers in various ways and the portrayal of wolves can differ greatly.

Overall, each comic approached wolves differently and no two comics scored exactly the same in each category. This varied representation of wolves was expected as each comic had a different plot with varying purposes, cultural backgrounds, and genres. Considering the rhetorical situation, visual and multimodal elements, and the evaluative coding of each comic provides some insight into how wolves are portrayed in North American comics, though general

conclusions cannot be drawn with the sample size of five. However, it is clear that the selected

comics are comparable in some respects but variable in others.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored how comics provide a unique medium for the topic of wolves by exploring the five selected North American comics. Chapter one, "Comics as a Medium," explored the unique characteristics of comics and the benefits and drawbacks of using them for the topic of wolves in North America. Since wolves are prevalent in so many of our stories, it was important to establish why comics were chosen for this work. Chapter two, "A Brief Science and History of Gray Wolves in North America," goes through the complex past of wolves concerning biology, politics, and rhetoric. As it can be easy to simplify the debate surrounding wolves to a yes or no, it is crucial that a more detailed explanation of interactions between humans and wolves in Europe and North America be described. Chapter three, "Wolves in Selected Comics," analyzed the rhetoric about wolves in five comics and used evaluative coding to draw comparisons between them. My analysis of the five selected comics found that most of the comics use facial expressions and/or gestures of wolves to convey meaning to the readers that can comment on and progress the story. Lighting and color can be used to impart feelings to the reader. The comics all use their own unique storytelling techniques that appeal to readers in various ways. Depending upon the rhetorical situation of the comics, the approach to portraying wolves can differ greatly. The selected comics had varying levels of scientific accuracy, which is related to the genre of the comic. Most of the selected comics portrayed wolves neutrally or slightly positively. Of the selected comics, three were Native American comics and two were Euro-American comics, but with different levels of Euro-American bias. While large generalizations cannot be made from the small sample size, comparing their various approaches to wolves still provides unique insight.

The ability of comics to show and tell helps to avoid binaries, particularly the one that wolves are good or evil. When it comes to a topic as complex as wolves and their place in North America, it is important to remember that neither extreme is the key to success, and "the demands for 'more wolves' or 'no wolves' leaves no opening for a middle ground" (Lappalainen 761). Comics can open up that middle ground and can help the reader understand that this situation goes beyond the simple binary. This binary needs to be challenged for popular opinion concerning wolves to change and for policy surrounding wolves to improve. It is important that wolves are present in North American ecosystems as they are keystone species. As various studies have shown, education and storytelling (which has the potential to be educational) can be helpful in reaching this goal by decentering Western paradigms and showing that all animals are important (Kuhl 1227). While there are many possible approaches to achieving this goal, comics are unique because of their visual and textual elements. Comics can also be more effective at changing people's minds as their defenses are lowered, not expecting a medium like comics to be persuasive or educational. The unexpectedness of comics' ability to change minds is what makes the medium so potentially beneficial to complicating the binary and progressing the conversation about wolves. The controversy surrounding wolves is well-known and therefore, people may have preconceived ideas without understanding the complexity of the problem. Their bias one way or another may inhibit them from learning more about wolves, so there is little opportunity for them to develop this understanding. Comics may be able to bypass the reader's preconceptions and make it possible for learning to happen.

I would expect that similar trends could be seen when examining how comics represent other animals and nature topics. Wolves are not the only animals that have been demonized in European and Euro-American history. When faced with an animal or force of nature that

challenges humans' existence, we tend to get uncomfortable, and "the comparative investigation of wolves, corvids, and spiders suggests that encounters with virtually all kinds of wildlife raise the same deep questions, i.e., about the place of humans in nature, about whether and how to exert control in the face of non-human agency, and about how to respond to symbolic associations activated by the animals" (Jürgens et al. 23). Therefore, I would expect similar trends to be seen when examining comics about corvids and spiders, among the many other animals and natural elements that have received similar treatment as wolves. There is a lot of potential for future research in examining comics on different topics for the same characteristics I analyzed here.

The methodology of this research is subjective as explained previously, so others may notice different characteristics of the comics than I did and may give different scoring for the three evaluative coding criteria I selected. However, the main goal of this methodology was to aid in comparing the five selected comics and I would argue that that goal was achieved. Future research could also benefit from a larger sample size of comics about wolves with the potential to focus on areas outside of North America. A larger sample size of comics is likely to result in different trends for the three criteria I examined. For example, I expect that the type of representation of wolves in different comics will not all be neutral as I was surprised that all of the selected comics for this thesis were fairly neutral. Future research could also look into other types of multimodal rhetoric, such as stickers, ads, and similar media. It would also be interesting to look at different parts of the world or more specific subgroups of North America and examine how their relationships with wolves differ from the cultures that I have analyzed so far. This type of research on wolves can potentially yield many interesting projects and insights.

This thesis has built upon the many previous scientific, literary, and rhetorical studies about wolves to combine these three fields together. Combining all of these factors may seem overwhelming, but it is important as "Three time-frames collided when Euro-Americans met wolves, and, by watching biology, folklore, and history interact, humans can better understand their place" (Coleman 14). Analyzing how wolves are portrayed in comics may help in reaching this understanding, and this understanding could have wide-sweeping effects on how humans interact with wolves. Overall, while this thesis barely scratches the surface of this topic, it is foundational work that can be built upon in the future.

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